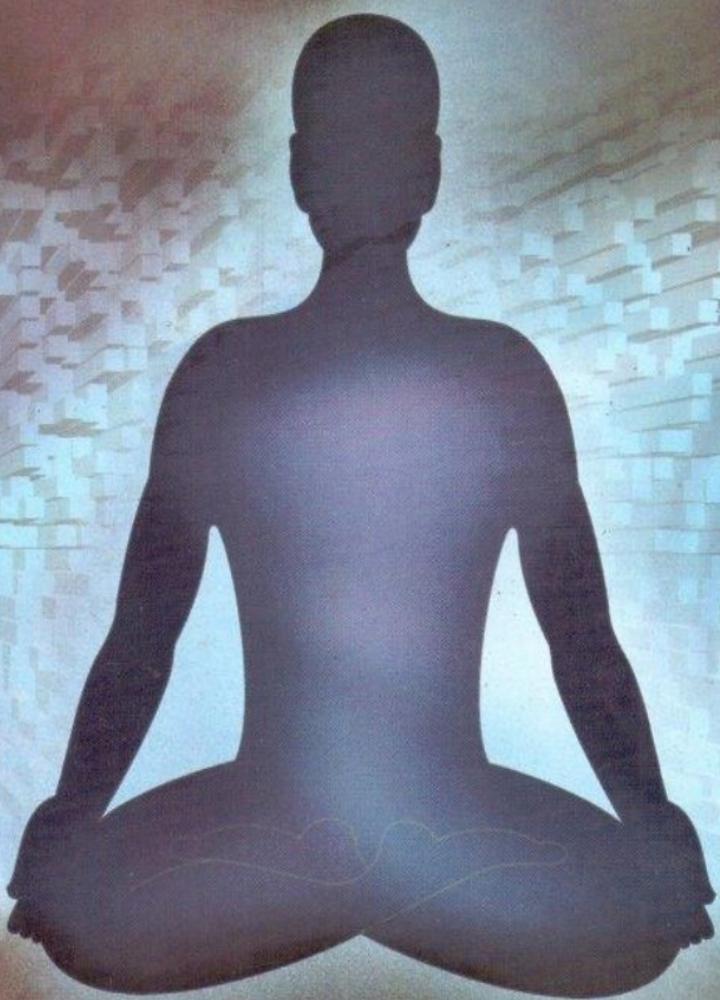


JĪVANA SĀDHANĀ

(A Noble Art of Living)



This is a compilation of articles first published in the special issue (January 2004) of Akhand Jyoti (Hindi) and later as a series of articles under the main theme "Art of Living" in "Akhand Jyoti The Light Divine"

Editors:
Dr. Pranav Pandya
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Contents

1. The Enlightened State of Self-awareness	009
2. Thought, Character and Conduct –The Triad of Personality	014
3. Attainment of Goal through Faith in the Divine	019
4. The Melodious Music of Life is Played on the Instrument of Sound Health	024
5. <i>Tapa</i> and <i>Vrata</i> bring Order into Life	028
6. <i>Hitbhuk, Mitbhuk, Ritbhuk</i>	033
7. Dress should accord with the national culture.	038
8. Imaginations should be meaningful with deep conviction in them	043
9. Firm determination is a mark of spiritual progress	049
10. Know the essence of tender emotions	054
11. Guidelines for sharpening the intellect	059
12. How to enrich our creative talents and memory?	064
13. Let creative potentials materialize fully	069
14. Creativity is developed by noble and positive thoughts	074
15. Embrace high ideals, achieve excellence	079
16. Guidelines for cultivating self-confidence	084
17. Develop self-respect.	089

18. Development of virtues – the only touchstone for self-evaluation 093
19. Key to all round success	098
20. Mutual understanding and tact	103
21. What should be ideal attitude towards adversities?	107
22. Stress is a boon, welcome it	111
23. Recognize the value of time ..	116
24. How to make the personality magnetic?	120
25. Self-expression should be effective.....	124
26. Characteristic attributes of leadership.....	128
27. Who can be a true visionary?	133
28. Let the fragrance of <i>Jivana Sadhana</i> waft across on this <i>Vasant</i> .	137
29. Golden tips for living a purposeful life	141



PREFACE

*Svayam vājimstanvam kalpayasva
svayam yajasva svayam jusasva
Mahimā te'nyena na sannaśe.*

Yajurveda 23/15

“O mighty *yajña puruṣa* (sacrificer)! Make your own body strong and capable. Perform the *yajña* yourself. Engage personally in religious pursuits. No one else can attain the glory that belongs you.”

Dear reader! The spring breeze charged with the subtle vital energy of *Yugdevata* (*Time Spirit*) has come in the form of these printed exhortations to fill you with new life, new spur and new hope. This breeze will blow off all the dust which the passing time may have deposited over the smouldering embers in you and rekindle it into leaping flames. You will experience the upsurge of a radiant glow, energy, warmth and ardour inside you that will propel you vigorously in the direction of *jivana sadhana* - the way of leading a healthy, vibrant, enlightened, happy and balanced life.

If you are sensing the stir of these feelings inside you, surely the *Yugdevata's* subtle *pranic* force has touched you somewhere. Otherwise, you would not have felt this new alertness and enthusiasm. Do not quibble about who is outwardly penning the words or framing the sentences. This indeed is the function of a two-rupee pen and some ink and

paper. But this assortment of trifles cannot impart to you the feeling that you are experiencing just now. This miracle is the work of *Gurudev's* transcendent consciousness which wants to enter your soul and transform it into its likeness with every line and every expression of this work. He is the inspiration, he is the vital force; he wants to take you ahead on this path.

The new century has cast some responsibility on each one of us. We have to rise to the occasion and meet those responsibilities. To acquire this worthiness, the sole method is *jivana sadhana*. It is this process which will mould us anew, refine us and open up vistas of a new world of possibilities in our lives. Thoughts lead to prudence, which in turn gives rise to inner determination and the latter gives rise to sincerity in *sadhana*; and continuation of this sincerity brings about miraculous changes in life. We all have to start afresh with this sequence and accomplish that which we have wanted but could not do for one reason or the other.

This is the royal road to personality development. How long will we remain enamoured of our pigmy identities? We have to develop and enlarge our personalities because only this is the basis of progress, prosperity and glory. This is needed not only for our own sakes but also for the sake of others. Today, in whichever direction we cast our gaze, no towering personality which can inspire humanity with the highest and noblest ideals, is visible. There is no dearth of pompous qualifications and degrees. Experts and specialists are scattered everywhere. But this surfeit of skill and expertise lacks the warmth and fragrance of a noble spirit. The rich are available but not the virtuous;

there is power and authority but not the devotion to see the One-in-All. The ugly dance of luxury and crudities is rampant all around, but the soothing flow of tender emotions, compassion and selfless service has dried up. Who then will regenerate the spring-wells of noble emotions? There is only one crying demand in life - give us our worthwhile ideal. The children, the students, the elite, the masses, all have this same demand. The problem is who is there to learn it from? It is we who have to fill this vacuum, who have to scale the Himalayan peaks of lofty ideals.

All are aware of the ills of the society. Everyone is busy blaming the others, branding them as bad, dishonest and cunning. In the newspapers, magazines and audio-visual media

everywhere corruption is a pet theme and high-sounding pontifications are being dished out day and night by variety of 'experts'. But no one really is able to supply an effective answer to these ills. The solution is one only, viz. the path of *jivana sadhana*. There is no alternative to it if we want to extricate ourselves from this morass.

Not in others' revilement, but in self-refinement lies the meaning of existence. Let us apply ourselves to the task of refining every aspect of our thought, character and conduct. Let us cleanse ourselves so thoroughly that all the blemishes and dirt are washed away, those acquired in this life as well as those coming from previous lives. Our *jivana sadhana* should rise to the level whence it is able to purify not only our thoughts but also our *samskars*. Our children and young ones should be able

to see their ideals in us. The situation today is that we teach good things to our children but fail to practice them ourselves. That is why, the young generation snubs and disrespects us. It is the deeds, not preachings that impart real education.

The mould of one personality forms another personality. As guardians, we should mould our personalities in the image we want to give to our children. If we are teachers, we should sculpt ourselves in a way that the students feel pride in emulating us. If we have taken a vow of social work, we should motivate others by the concrete example of our conduct. Remember, no amount of blaming or criticism will reform a person, change comes only by love and caring and living examples. We should so lead our lives that each one of us becomes a living training center. This is the essence of *jivana sadhana*.

O progeny of the *Mahākāla* (the Absolute Time Spirit)! Do not waste this precious time anymore. Awake! Arise! And start on this journey of *jivana sadhana*. You are not alone on this path. You have the omnipotent God with you. The blessings of *Gurudev* are being showered upon you. The subtle astral beings of the Himalayan *rishis* are singing sacred chants for you. The gods in their celestial abodes are showering their divine graces upon you. These auspicious moments must not be allowed to go in vain. Our place is in the front ranks of the makers of the New Age. Numerous virtues of *jivana sadhana* and responsibilities of the new era are waiting for us.

- Pranav Pandya

The enlightened state of self-awareness

*Yo jāgāra tamchah kāmayante,
 yo jāgāra tamu sāmāni yanti.
 Yo jāgāra tamayam soma ahā,
 tavāhamasmi sakhye nyokah.*

-Rigveda 5/44/14

‘He who is enlightened, the (vedic) verses invoke him.
 He who is enlightened, the hymns of sāma are sung to him.
 He who is enlightened, only to him Soma says that he finds
 delight in his friendship.’”

The truth of life lies in self-awareness or enlightenment. Only he who is inwardly awake is living in the real sense. The life of an unenlightened person is nothing more than a state of deep unconsciousness or coma. There is not much to choose between a comatose person in a hospital and one who is devoid of self-awareness. The only difference between the two is that unlike the comatose one the latter is able to move and walk around. Both spend almost their entire lives on the support system of involuntary or reflex actions of the unconscious mind. There is no meaning or purpose in such a life.

For this very reason, the essence of *jīvana sādhana* (holistic refinement of the body, mind and soul) can be encapsulated in one small word "*bodha*" or enlightenment, i.e. to become awake and perform all actions with full consciousness. Our activities have almost wholly become mechanical. The body has learnt some movements and memorized some set patterns and paths. When we walk, for example, our body knows when to turn left or right, and it mechanically does so. When we reach our homes, we enter through the door. But these actions do not require any real awareness; they are performed automatically, without any conscious volition. In this sense, our entire life, almost ninety percent of it, remains in a state of non-consciousness. This non-consciousness is our bondage. It is as if a big stone is submerged in water with only its tip protruding above. In the same way, the major part of our conscious being, the 'greater' mind remains immersed in

darkness; only a very small portion of it is visible on the outside. What we know as and call our mind is in fact a very tiny part, and that which we do not even recognize is the much greater part. Modern psychology calls this very hidden entity "unconscious mind"

Rishis (enlightened sages and seers) explain that unless this unconscious mind is made conscious, unless the whole of it gradually becomes filled with light, *jivana sadhana* will remain incomplete. When the lamp of consciousness is fully lit within us, when every nook and corner of the interior is illumined with its glow, and no part remains in the dark, only then we will become fully enlightened and our *jivana sadhana* will reach fruition. As this enlightened state of true self-awareness begins to dawn, all the potencies of life, all its mysteries, all kinds of creative talents will automatically start revealing and activating themselves.

What is the process and procedure of this awakening? The first requirement for this is a spirit of enquiry. Only those who enquire or seek deeply, and whose seeking is genuine are able to tread the path of *jivana bodha* (self-awareness). It is this seed of enquiry that sprouts forth, grows, and gradually leads to awakening. What should be the form of seeking? The answer is that, one should continually reflect on the meaning and nature of life. What is its aim, objective and purpose? Reflect on the present course of life on which we are mindlessly

meandering, and on the actions which we are mechanically performing.

"*Manasi vichāraya bārambāram*" this aphorism of Acharya Shankara tells us that as we begin to ponder over the important questions of life, and as we grow more and more inquisitive about it, we get more and more deeply acquainted with the verities of our life. It is through the genuineness and intensity of seeking that we become able to know ourselves, and then we are surprised at our folly: "Oh! How in the world were we continuing with such a senseless existence"! Enquiry explains to us the meaning and purpose of life; it reveals the *raison d'etre* of things and empowers us to discriminate between the right and the wrong, the virtuous and the vicious, the purposeful and the purposeless. In short, it makes us conscious and wakeful. This is the natural result of enquiry and may be considered as the second stage in the process of awakening.

In the state of wakefulness, we are able to cognize our strengths and potentials. Correct understanding of the state of mind and meaningful use of the available circumstances are possible in this very condition. Side by side, we can also identify and overcome the psychological and material obstacles which had hitherto prevented us from actualizing our potentials, from giving proper expression to our talents, and from experiencing the pleasure of a meaningful existence.

It is this very depth and intensity of awakening that becomes *jivana bodha*. Every facet of life, its every nook and corner is illumined with the light of awareness; nothing remains hidden, nothing remains unseen, nothing remains unfamiliar. Every event in life, big or small, becomes a lesson. The whole life becomes a school, a continuing education, instead of being a burden. He who lives in true awareness, utilizes the moments of happiness in the best possible manner. At the same time he also knows how to derive benefit from the times of trials and tribulations. Moments of joy are yoga for him, while moments of pain turn into *tapa* (disciplinary austerities). In every situation, he has full comprehension of the meaning of existence.

It is in this state that the interior begins to grow with the light of the truth that only those who are wakeful, alert and conscious can walk the path of *jivana sadhana*. This path is so perilous and demanding that even the slightest sluggishness and carelessness in effort will result in fall and failure; the personality will remain dull, confused and underdeveloped. To understand the different dimensions of the personality and to illuminate them is the first step on the path of *jivana sadhana*.

2

Thought, character and conduct - the triad of personality

*Sam vah pchyantām tanvah sam manāmsi samuvrratā
Sam vo'�am brahmanaspatirbhargah sam vo ajigamat.*

- Atharvaveda: 6/74/1

"May your body, mind (thought), dharma (character) and action (conduct) be in synergy. May God, the Lord of knowledge, harmonize you, and the Lord of splendour integrate you."

Understanding the different dimensions of personality and a proper synthesis between them provides energy for *jivana sadhana*. It is absolutely essential for such a *sadhaka* to become fully familiar with his own personality and know which are the aspects, that express his inner consciousness. 'Personality' is a widely used term. It is used in different meanings and connotations in psychology. Psychologists have written much about it. But still most of the people remain ignorant of the essence or real meaning of the term. The depths of personality yet remain unfathomed.

In the beginning, the psychologists may have understood the word 'personality' simply as a derivative of the Latin 'persona', meaning a mask or facade or outer covering. But now it is commonly accepted that the real reasons behind human behavior remain hidden in the depths of his interior. If we are to reach at the root of a man's conduct, we will have to dig through the layers of his character and mind. Without properly knowing these entities an objective explanation of his conduct will be impossible.

A meaningful definition of personality may be given as the aggregate of a person's characteristic features and qualities. These features and qualities are manifested in his external conduct but their origins go far deeper and remain hidden in his thoughts and *samskārs* (persistent mental impressions). This is also spoken of by the *rishis*

"yanmanasā dhyāyati tadvācha vadati' yadvācha vadati,
tatkarmaṇā karoti' yat karmaṇa karoti,
tadbhīsampradyate". Meaning: As a man thinks in his mind,
so is his speech; as he speaks, so does he conduct himself;
as is his conduct, so does he become.

Thought, character and conduct these form the three-dimensional identity of personality. Between these three, the first dimension is of thought. It consists of that which we think and keeps cropping up and circulating in our ideas and imaginations. The continuity and intensity of this thought shapes our character. The process of this character building is very gradual, because the underlying basis of character is the *samskārs* or innate dispositions which lie dormant in the depths of the unconscious mind. As long as the intensity of thought does not reach the stage where it can refine the *samskārs*, the character remains totally unaffected. This very composite of thought and character is reflected in the conduct. So, if the personality is to be refined and developed to its fullest potential, and along the right path, it would be imperative to mould its three-dimensional nature afresh.

There is an instructive anecdote about moulding the personality in this way. In South India there was a very learned and *tapasvi* sage, Sadashiva Brahmendra Swami. Those days he was studying *vedanta* in his *guru's ashrama*. His whole time was spent in study, contemplation and *tapa*. Once a renowned scholar, Pandit Mahashaya, visited the

ashrama. It so happened that soon he and Sadashiva Swami were locked in a debate. In no time, Sadashiva Swami, with his dazzling scholarship, tore all his adversary's arguments to shreds and reduced him to a position where the Pandit Mahashaya had to apologize and retreat.

Feeling exultant at his victory, Sadashiva Swami narrated the incident to his *gurudev* expecting probably a pat on the back. But quite the opposite happened. *Gurudev* severely reprimanded him. He said: "Sadashiva! Noble thought is worthwhile only when it builds a noble character, and a noble character is meaningful only when it is translated into noble conduct. You studied and contemplated on *vedanta*, but were unable to sculpt the character of a truth seeking *sadhaka*, nor were you able to train your conduct accordingly. For this reason, your whole effort thus far at study and contemplation can only be worthy of condemnation.

These words of his *guru* burst Sadashiva Swami's bloated sense of ego. Very humbly he asked: "*Gurudev!* How should we sculpt noble character"? *Gurudev* replied: "Son! To sculpt the personality afresh, one should have, first of all, its clear outline in the mind. For example, for formation of the personality of a truth seeking *sadhaka*, it would be essential that every moment of the *sadhaka's* thinking is imbued with his *jñana sadhana*. The second important point is that no idea or element of thought contrary to the main purpose is allowed to enter the mind.

Thirdly, the intensity of purposeful thinking is maintained continuously. Reflection and contemplation must continue ceaselessly. By such deep thought the suitable personality is formed."

"But remember", *gurudev* warned, "contemplation is meant to shape one's own personality and not to score debating points over others and satisfy one's ego. Unnecessary argumentation is a hindrance to the process, and only by avoiding this can a new character be sculpted - a character, which purifies and illumines even the nature and attributes of the body and the sense-organs. It is for this reason that the *vedic rishis* have included the body and the sense-organs within the definition of character."

"As for conduct", *gurudev* continued, "it should be wholly transparent and guileless like the character, no matter how much trials and suffering one has to undergo. It is through the conduct that deeper layers of a man's personality find expression. So it must be commensurate with the dignity and honour of one's *jivana sadhana*". Sadashiva Swami imbibed deeply these words of his *guru* and advanced on the path of his *jivana sadhana*. For those who wish to tread this path in a similar way it will also be essential that they find a noble and lofty goal for themselves.

Attainment of goals through faith in the divine

*Aum bhūrbhuvaḥ svah, tat saviturvarenyam
Bhargo devasya dhīmahi, dhiyo yo naḥ prachodayāt.*

- Rigveda 3/62/10; Yajurveda 3/35; Samveda 1462

“May we behold in our inner self the Supreme Being who is the embodiment of vital energy (*prāṇa*), the destroyer of suffering, the annihilator of sin, the joy incarnate, the sublime, the resplendent, the Divine. May that Supreme Being inspire our minds towards the enlightened, righteous path.”

The *Gayatri Mahamantra* is not only helpful in attainment of noble goals in life, but in essence, is itself the ultimate goal of life. Only by beholding the Supreme Being in the inner self and by resolutely treading the righteous path, can mankind search for and find its sublime goal. An aimless life is a miserable life of wandering in the wilderness. The absence of a worthy aim renders all the means and efforts meaningless. Unless the goal is clear, the internal energy and latent strengths can not be channeled in the right direction. All the potentialities begin to wither away in a life without a lofty purpose to pursue after.

To prevent this eventuality, it is imperative that a goal be fixed. For selecting and fixing the goal, it is essential to minutely search one's inner being, because only such a close search will unravel the facts whose analysis will enable us to determine the goal. In connection with this inner investigation the first point is to identify the talents hidden within oneself. That is, to know one by one all the latent qualities that are yearning to find expression. The second point is to pin-point that specific God-gifted spark or impulse which has been stirring us since our childhood. The third point is those challenges which have frequently surfaced before us and with which we are still surrounded. An intensive scrutiny of these challenges is very essential, because without surmounting them, we can not proceed towards our goal. The fourth item is our own value-system of life which we have inculcated within us and cherish. Generally, this value-system abides in us in the form of some noble thoughts and duties, and we are not inclined to

abandon them under any circumstances. The fifth point concerns those resources which we possess presently; it is this asset which will come to our aid in the course of our progression towards the goal. And the sixth prerequisite is those opportunities which destiny has bestowed upon us. Only after reflecting well over these six points, should we choose and determine our goal.

But even more important than the six points enumerated above is the seventh, which is our own vision or dream whose rainbowy glow has illumined our inner mindscape since the very beginning. To realize this dream could be the chosen goal of our life. It is a pleasant truth that a dream is born in every heart, we believe in its fulfillment, then our dream takes concrete shape, and a miracle is wrought.

Whatever be the goal career related, or economic, material, mental, familial or spiritual once it has been set after careful consideration, it is not wise to change it frequently. At the same time, it is necessary that in selection of the goal, the above mentioned seven considerations are kept in view, because impossible ventures, such as settling down on the Mars or pulling down the Sun to the Earth can not be set as the goal in life. But if a feasible and logical goal has been set, there should be no question of going back.

After fixation of the goal, the next requirement is total concentration on it. Total concentration means that the whole personality should merge in that, so much so that the one begins to be identified with the other. When firm

resolve, full devotion and unwavering faith become combined, attainment of the goal is ensured. The seemingly impossible begins to be not only possible but attainable, successive steps start gaining momentum, and opportunities begin to emerge spontaneously.

Those whose search of a goal is over and who are advancing towards it with complete faith will ultimately succeed in realizing it this much is certain. In this connection, the memoirs of the great seer Swami Vivekanand is instructive. Swamiji has written that after the *Mahasamadhi* of his *guru* Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansadev, all the *guru-bhāis* (brother disciples) were left without money, home and means. There was no proper arrangement for even food. But, yes, their goal was crystal clear before their eyes. Also, they all had unwavering faith in the nobility and loftiness of the goal, i.e. the restoration of the sublime glory of Mother India and Indian culture, so that the banner of Indian culture would once again flutter in the world.

But how would this lofty goal be achieved? To this, there was only one answer divine help, because those who have unwavering faith in The Divine would rediscover their innate strengths. They would be able to run and not get tired; they would keep walking and not feel exhausted. Swamiji says: "The experience shows that the very thought of divine help generates in the mind a unique serenity which is beyond description. Whenever I have felt loneliness in the course of my *sadhana*, I have remembered Christ's assuring words, 'Be not afraid, be not disappointed, because I, your Lord, your

God, am always with you. I will accompany you wherever you go' "

The inspiring moments of God's help and experience of the Divine are always helpful in attainment of an exalted goal. If, however, the goal is vast and grand, it should be completed in stages. It will be better if it is broken down into yearly, monthly and fortnightly units, and we proceed towards it gradually, albeit steadily, determinedly and faithfully. We should look upon God as our benefactor and the *Gayatri mantra* as our anchor. This divine anchor imparts to the personality a mystic strength and enables it to cover the distance to the goal easily. One should not, though, neglect one's health during the course of this sacred journey.

The melodious
 music of life is played
 on the instrument
 of sound health

*Ayurme pāhi prānam me pāhyapānam me pāhi
 vyanam me pāhi cakśurme pāhi śrotram me pāhi
 vācam me pinva mano me jinvatmanam me pāhi jyotirme yacca*

Yajurveda 14/17

O God! May you protect my life-span. May you protect my prāṇa, apāna and vyāna life currents. May you protect my eyes and ears. May you enrich my voice and make my mind contented. May you protect my soul and bestow light on me.

Good health is the pivot of *jivana sadhana*. Any kind of progress - temporal or spiritual is conditional on vibrant health. Money, fame, power, knowledge and even *tapa* all depend on it. But inspite of this being a common knowledge, most of the people are casual about it, albeit with varying excuses and justifications. Some are too busy to care for health, while some lay the blame on circumstances. What is surprising is that even the spiritual seekers are often found negligent about their health in the name of *tapa*.

In reality, the root cause of neglecting health is the lack of a holistic vision of life. Most of the people are in such a tearing hurry to 'arrive' or get more and more that they do not have time to pause and think about their bodily well-being. By the time they come to their senses, it is too late and they are trapped in the vicious cycle of diseases. Their vitality has ebbed and they are reduced to the pitiable plight of the lamp which is on the verge of extinction for want of oil. Now nothing helps, not even the things which they had been acquiring so far at the cost of health. The very continuance of life becomes a pain.

The modern age is witnessing an increasing lack of self-control. People's craving for sense-indulgence, their madness for pleasures of all sorts is increasing by the day and this, in turn, is devastating their health. The wise are aware of the truth that lack of self-control is akin to playing *holi* with one's own blood. At first, the sport appears enticing, the bright red spurs one on and on to ever more rounds of carnal pleasures until soon the situation becomes grave and vicious. Incontinence of different kinds gives

birth to diseases of all sorts. These diseases impose many restrictions and prohibitions on the future life-pattern; but to the habits long formed, no restriction is either palatable or implementable. As a result, life becomes a nightmare, being slowly ground between the two wheels of mental agony and physical pain.

Sometimes, in the name of *tapa* and *sadhana*, the body and health are subjected to such severities that the very edifice begins to crumble. The irony is that even the spiritual powers which had been sought prove a chimera. The only gain is a show of pretense where the practitioner gets slowly ruined and the audience, bored. Castigating these cruelties to the body in the name of *tapa* Yogeshwar Krishna says in the *Bhagvadgita*

*Karśayantah śarīrasthāṁ bhutagrāmamchetasaḥ
Mā chaivāntah śarīrasthāṁ tānviddhyāsuraniśchayān.*

- 17/6 -

Meaning: The ignoramus who enfeeble both, the elements existing in the corporeal form and also Me, the cosmic spirit indwelling the inner-self, consider them as of demonic disposition, O Arjuna!

The true spiritual life is a *sātwika* (simple and pious) life-style. It is the confluence of *sanyam*, *sadhana* and *sewa* (self-control, self-awakening and service), a grand experiment in purification of thoughts and emotions. Irregular eating and random fasting can not be called *tapa*.

There is an instructive story in this connection in Buddhist *Jataka* tales. Once prince Prashravana came to

Bhagwan Tathagat to learn *jivana sadhana*. *Bhagwan* preached to the visiting *sadbakas* at specific times only. This time varied for each *sadbaka*, depending on his inner state. Prince Prashravana had to wait for some time. Meanwhile, he began fasting of his own accord. Starvation, combined with haphazard daily routine, took a heavy toll on his health. He fell victim to many ailments, too.

Now Tathagat called him and taught him the precept of middle path: "Son Prashravana, you are an accomplished *veena* player. Tell me, when does the right music come out of *veena*"? Prashravana replied: "*Bhagwan!* When the strings of *veena* are in perfect tension. If the strings are loose, or taut even slightly more than required, the right note can not be produced by the *veena*" The Buddha smiled at this reply and said affectionately: "Son! This is true of *jivana sadhana* too. The sweet melody of life resonates neither in excessive indulgences nor in extreme rigors. Both these conditions can generate inharmony and disorder only. The music of life is produced on the instrument of *sanyama* or self-control which consists in avoiding the extremes and adopting moderation"

These words of the Buddha enlightened Prashravana and he realized that neglect of health is no recipe for *jivana sadhana*; it does not produce melodious music in *jivan-veena*. For sound health, one has to bring about harmony between the body, mind and soul, and use judgement and discrimination to make life holistic and balanced. Regulating and refining the daily routine is the first step in this direction.

5

Tapa and vrata bring order into life

*Yena devāḥ svarāruruhurhitvā śarīrammasya nabhim //
Tena geṣma suktasya lokam dharmasya vratena tapsā yaśasyavah //*

- Atharvaveda 4/11/6

“The Supreme Being by whose grace the self-realized, after discarding their mortal bodies, have attained to the elixir of mokṣa or salvation, by the grace of that Supreme Being, and by vrata and tapa we seekers of glory will also attain to that transcendental abode.”

Regulating the daily routine not only improves health but also imparts a certain glow to the whole *jīvana sādhanā*. The daily routine may appear to constitute a small aspect of life, but on a deeper look we find a reflection of the whole gamut of life in it. The values of life, its aims, direction, ideals, goal—everything we can glimpse in the daily routine. One whose day-to-day life is haphazard and disorderly, remains confused and aimless in the larger scheme of life, too. This is a cardinal truth whatever arguments and excuses to the contrary may be proffered.

An organized routine ensures refinement and priming of the energies of the body, mind and soul, and their application in a specific direction. It is important to distinguish that order or organization does not merely mean the existence of a particular condition; the indication of a particular direction, too, is implicit in it. In disorder, on the other hand, there is neither any specific condition nor any direction. In order, there is spontaneous creation, whereas in disorder, only destruction flourishes. This truth can be perceived clearly in every walk of life and every nook of the society.

Haphazard routine not only ruins health but also gives birth to serious psychological problems. Even the school going children and teenagers, not to speak of the adults, have become victims of these maladies. A disease like diabetes is not sparing even small children now.

Miscellaneous studies point to only one factor as the root culprit, viz. the life-style has become unbalanced; the daily routine has become chaotic. Sleep time is wasted in fun and frolic while that for waking and working is spent in sleeping. This topsy-turviness has antagonized nature. Experts of human physiology as well as of human psychology are convinced that man will have to suffer the ill consequences of tampering with the biological rhythm ordained by nature. And this is exactly what is happening. If we have to salvage the situation, there is no alternative to reversing the inverted. This is the only solution which can bring modern life presently groping in the maze of wilderness back on the right tracks.

There is an illuminating anecdote often related among the Vaishnav saint community. An elderly saint lived in Vrindavan, the *dhām* or abode of Lord Krishna. Many among the wealthy and elite were his followers. They, too, suffered from the frailties which invariably develop from surfeit of money and power, but still they all possessed sense of veneration for their *guru*. They would often ask their *guru* about the ultimate secret of life. The saint fenced the question with a laugh because he knew that the underlying spirit of the question was not genuine enquiry but mere curiosity.

But one day the contrary happened. A true seeker asked the same question. In response, the guru became somber. He sent the seeker to the great saint Roop

Goswami of Vrindavan with the instruction that if the aspirant could learn the essence of that saint's life, then he, too, would instruct him in the ultimate mystery of life. What the saint said was somewhat unusual but the disciple had total faith in him. In pursuance of his *guru's* instruction, he remained with Roop Goswami for some time and then came back. When he bowed at the feet of his *guru*, the latter looked at him questioningly and asked: "Tell me, what is the essence of the life of Goswamiji"? "*Tapa* and *vrata*", the disciple replied succinctly.

The saint's face lit up with a sense of satisfaction and he said: "Son! *Tapa* and *vrata* are the quintessence of not only Goswami's life but the ultimate secret of everyone's life. When a person is able to bring order into his daily routine with the help of the formula of *tapa* and *vrata* every other thing money, fame, power, respect and spiritual glories become easily accessible to him. *Tapa* means to prevent the wastage of one's vigor and energy, and *vrata* means to resolutely pursue the path of self-enlightenment"

Those who are desirous of regulating their daily routine should get up before sunrise, prepare a schedule of the day's work, and fix one goal for everyday. They should spend the entire day within the framework of this discipline and go to bed in the night immersing themselves in the remembrance of the merciful God.

Some practical guidelines to a disciplined routine can be learnt from the *sādhaka*'s diary printed by Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya. This diary will help the *sādhakas* organize their routine and guide them into living a life of *tapa* and *vrata*.

It is important to keep in mind that the seed of wakefulness lies in sleep. So that the day is begun on the right note, sleep should commence at the right time too. The diet also should be regulated because food impacts the entire course of life.

6

Hitbhuk, Mitbhuk, Ritbhuk

*Na mā tamanna śramannota tandranna vochāma mā sunoteti somam
Yo me pnādyo dadadyo nibodhādyo mā sunvantamupa gobhirāyat.*

- Rigveda 2/30/7

'O men! Only those food articles are fit for consumption that make the body energetic and contented, that provide glow and comfort, and that make the organs strong and fit for the performance of yajña. Do not ever stock and consume those herbs / food materials that sap the body's strength and produce lethargy and intoxication.'

The effect of food on the body is comprehensive. Be it physical health or mental well-being, both are intrinsically linked with food, and keeps taking up and down swings depending on changes in it. It is a matter of common experience. Bad and irregular dietary habits make the body sick and the mind restless.

If we were to enumerate the ill effects of rich, pungent, spicy and fried food, we will have to list practically all the diseases, because all of them have direct or indirect connection with food. The fashionable fast food, packed food or junk food of today also fall in the same category. This new style of eating, widely prevalent these days, has given many a body-blow to the quality of human life.

Food is a basic necessity of life. Everybody knows this, but few have an idea of what to eat, when to eat, and how to eat. Let's first take the "what to eat?" aspect. The only proper and right answer to this question is that we should eat only what provides nourishment to the body. It is important to remember that we eat to live and do not live to eat. So, if the right kind of food is to be selected out of a long list of eatables, we will have to give preference to only those items that have nutritional value and are beneficial for health. Such articles can very easily be identified. Everybody is aware, for example, of the value of fresh fruits, vegetables, pulses, cereals etc.

Many cooking ingredients like pungent spices, appetizers, pickles etc. lack any nutritive value and are

manifestly harmful to health; and so are the processes of frying, stewing etc. These render even healthy food useless and deleterious. Materials inimical to health are found not only in the kitchen but also outside; e. g. liquor and intoxicants of various kinds, betel, tobacco, *zarda*, *gutka* and so many other such things have acquired the status of food supplements and are used in a routine way. The situation has become so alarming that even the food habits of the elite of society make one wonder why these educated and well-informed persons have lost their sense of wise discrimination. There are some exceptions, of course, in this class but their number is negligible.

Now, "when to eat"? Again, the answer is only one viz. twice a day at the most, and that too, when the appetite has built up sufficiently. Eating randomly, or taking frequent snacks and breakfast in addition to regular meals is going to do no good. Dietary habits, these days, have so much deteriorated that biologists and psychologists have made this matter a subject of their research. They classify hunger in different types, for example, (i) strong craving to eat at the sight of others' eating (ii) frequent urge to eat during moments of tension (iii) fixed-time-appetite in accordance with the biological clock, etc. The experts consider the former two types wrong and only the third type right.

Now having known that one should eat only when there is real appetite for it, there follows the next question "how to eat"? The answer is that food should be taken in a quiet and restful manner, with humble remembrance of God

as His *prasada* (grace). If food is seen as God's *prasada*, even the simple '*chapati*' (unleavened bread) proves nourishing. On the contrary, sweetmeats, multi-course dishes and dry fruits, if taken hurriedly and in fretful mood, impair health and produce ailments. The right food taken in the right manner is the key to sound health.

The *Ayurveda* (ancient healing therapy) has an interesting and instructive story. Once it occurred to *Maharishi Charaka*, the great pioneer of *Ayurveda*, that he should test whether his pupils understood correctly his teachings. He metamorphosed into a pigeon and sat on a tree, through under which many *vaidyas* (healers) were passing by. The pigeon called out: "*Ko ruk, ko ruk, ko ruk*"? (Who is healthy, who is healthy, who is healthy?) The *vaidyas* paid no heed to pigeon's words. The *Maharishi* thought that either they did not comprehend what the tiny bird was saying, or they were ignoring him. He flew from there and chose another tree. Incidentally, the great scholar *Vaghbhatta* was passing that way. He heard the query of *Maharishi* and replied repeatedly thrice: "*Hitbhuk, hitbhuk, hitbhuk*", i.e. healthy is one who eats the right type of food. *Charaka*-turned-pigeon asked again, "*Ko ruk, Ko ruk, Ko ruk*"? *Vagdatta* answered: "*Mithbhuk, mithbhuk, mithbhuk*" i.e. the one who eats in moderation. The 'bird' repeated the question a third time. *Vaghbhatta*'s response this time was: "*Ritbhuk, ritbhuk, ritbhuk*" i.e. one who eats according to season; and what he has earned through righteous means. The bird flew away satisfied, as his question had been answered correctly.

Three words or stipulations may be laid down about diet- *hit*, *mit* and *rit*. *Hitbhooji* is one who consumes only those materials that are useful and beneficial for health. Such a person eats for health, not taste. *Mitbhooji* is that who eats in moderation. Gluttons cannot do any kind of *sadhana*. They remain pre-occupied with finding digestive powders and tablets after meals.

The third and most important stipulation about food is *rit*. It implies piety and purity of thought and what is suitable in a particular season. The meaning of *rit* inheres in the inner attitude with which the food is prepared and taken. What are the feelings of the person preparing the food? Whether or not the eaters are dutiful and conscientious? *Rit* food can be prepared only by one who is full of loving kindness, who is suffused with motherly affection. And then the means by which we earn our livelihood must also be righteous and honest. Remember, the more we extend our goodwill to others, the more our inner strength increases. If the food that goes into our stomach is sullied with others' feelings of deep hurt, it will corrupt our feelings too.

The truth is, an evolution of the food habit is an evolution of consciousness. The nature of our consciousness is refined or perverted depending upon the nature of the food we consume. This very refinement, or perversion is reflected in our style of living too.

7

Dress should accord with the national culture

Vastreñeva vāsayā manmanā śuchim

- Rigveda 1/140/1

*We cover the sacred and the private (organs) with
the right dress.*

The style of dress reveals a person's cultural affinities; it indicates that the person cherishes deep inside him particular cultural values. Blind imitation of western dress is a pointer to thoughtless belief in superiority of western civilization and culture. This tendency shows that such persons are cut off from their own cultural moorings. Their sense of pride in Indian culture and motherland has virtually died down. Otherwise, why should they be reluctant to adopt the dress style of their own country? Those who are desirous of treading the path of *jivana sadhana* should be conscious about their clothing.

The recent history of our country underlines the significance of this fact. The great men who led the nation during the tumultuous days of the freedom struggle, had almost wholly received Western/English education. Many of them had studied in England. Some of them had even turned down high and prestigious posts like the I.C.S. In the initial stages and during their studentship, almost all wore English style dress. But when love for the nation began to stir them, their dress styles changed too. Barrister Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi could become Mahatma Gandhi only by adopting Indian dress and ethos. His followers and associates, too, set out on the noble task of awakening the nation after adopting native style of clothing.

There is a touching incident having a bearing on this matter. The world famous chemical scientist Dr. Prafulla Chandra Roy was Professor in Calcutta University. As

befitted a university professor, his apparel, too, was western. Those were the days of the Independence Movement. The whole country was resonating with national sentiments. The sensitive heart of Dr. P. C. Roy could not remain unaffected by all this. Love for the nation began to stir in his bosom too. But he was in a fix. How could he pursue this love in the midst of his scientific work? In what way could he serve the nation? To find the answer, he met Gandhiji. He was wearing western dress as usual at that time. Gandhiji looked at him from top to bottom and said with a smile: "Roy Sir! What was the great hurry that you have come unclothed"? Dr. Roy was perplexed. Why was Mahatmaji talking in riddles today? I have come fully clothed, yet he is saying that I am without clothes. Gandhiji explained: "Nation can not be served properly under alien attire. National values, national sentiments, national culture these all have only one identity and that is our own national mode of dressing". Now Professor Roy was able to understand the import of Gandhiji's words. He completely changed his attire from that day and made the ethnic *khadi* his life-long companion.

Those who advance the excuses of dress norms operative in technical and higher education institutions should stand reminded here that there are so many persons working in our mission (Gayatri Pariwar) who have completed their technical/higher education in *dhoti-kurta*. Students doing engineering studies including M. Tech. and that too from the best institutes of the country, donned

dhoti-kurta and maintained the dignity of our culture. There is a famous proverb: "Where there is a will, there is a way". So the need is to generate the will; corresponding ways will materialize on their own. With strong will power and overflowing love for one's culture, the entire course of life can be transformed, what to speak of the dress style.

The modes of dress prevalent these days reflect neither Indianness nor Indian culture. The general wear on school and college campuses is expressive of only tastlessness and lack of decorum. The situation at homes is no better. It all indicates that our cultural sense is fast depleting. Even from the health point of view experts regard the body-hugging and skin-revealing apparel as unsuitable. It lies upon the young generation of the country to check and reverse this rapidly worsening trend. Any appeal to those whose cultural sense has died and in whom national sentiments have almost dried up is futile. But those, who have become indifferent for some other reasons, should wake up. Let such brave young men and women come forward and, through their mode of dress, reflect their distinctive nationality and culture.

There are some important elements of a proper sense of dress. The first is hygiene. Not only the clothes but the body, too, should be kept clean. Unkempt hair and uncut nails, for example, are a public announcement that we are not yet civilized. The second element is selection of apparel in accord with the season. The textile and the style

both should match the different seasons - summer, winter and rainy. The third point is about the general nature and form of the dress. Instead of being very tight and body-hugging, it should be slightly loose-fitting. At the same time, the cut should be such that the body could be properly covered. The fourth element concerns the understanding of our cultural roots. There should be no glaring antagonism between the dress and the socio-cultural values. As far as possible, the attire should be in conformity with our soil and our culture. Our dress should announce to all that we are not only politically but also culturally independent and we have firm belief in the Indian ethos. To make this belief strong, we will have to give proper direction to our imaginations and learn the art of putting them to right application.



8

Imaginations should be meaningful with deep conviction in them

*Yat te divam yat pthivin mano jagam durakam
Tat ta a vartayamasinha ksayaya jivase.*

- Rigveda 10/58/2

“O Young Man! Your mind which has soared to the heavens and your mind which has gone very far on the earth, we bring that mind of yours back here for dwelling and for a happy life.”

The mind keeps flying on the wings of imaginations. With infinite speed, it takes joy-rides to visible and invisible worlds but invariably fails to utilize these imaginations for a happy life here on this *terra-firma*. Most of the imaginations remain in the state of never-to-be-materialized dreams and keep tantalizing and tormenting the inner consciousness time and again. This naturally gives rise to the critical question whether there is any effective way of putting these imaginations and ideas to fruitful use.

There is indeed a method, but very few are familiar with it. In the experience of the select few, imagination is the divine potency of human consciousness. It is this power which enables man to transcend the limitations of his ego-bound identity and reach out to the Infinite Cosmic Reality. Its use unlocks the door to new experiences in life, and gives new dimensions to consciousness. By imaginations, new creative energies sprout forth, the arts are created and the foundation of research is laid. The first step on the path of all achievements, be they mundane or spiritual, is taken on the basis of imaginations.

In normal course, we have their first intimations in the form of waves arising in the mind. We perceive their close presence as mysterious aspects of the seen and the unseen life. Then our emotions come into play. With this intermingling of imaginations and emotions a beautiful rainbow spreads across the inner sky. This multi-hued luminousness then yearns to break out of the sanctum of

mind and finally descends to the play-area of life. Many are the external forms of its expression. When it emerges in words, different forms of literature are born; poetry, short story, play, novel, essay - all types and styles of literary writings are the worded modes of this expression.

Its expression in sounds becomes music. In the myriad tunes of innumerable instruments it is the blend of imaginations and emotions that finds an outlet. This very blending, when applied through strokes of a brush, spreads the magic of painting. Its expression in the crafts leads to the birth of so many craft forms like architecture, sculpture etc. Its manifestation in food items assumes the form of culinary art and conjures a variety of excellent dishes. From the earliest times to this day, whatever art forms mankind has devised are but the multi-dimensional expressions of this very imagination-emotion combine.

The meeting of imagination with intellect opens new vistas of scientific and technological advance. The very first step in any research work is the act of imagination. The unanimous prescription of all research experts is: first the right delineation of the imagination or concept, then the beginning of the actual research work. When the waves of imaginations arising in the mind are chiselled by the intellect and synthesized, and channeled into a focused direction imagination takes the right shape. Research projects are formulated to actualize these very sculpted imaginations. The scientific community, carrying

the gifts of prosperity and glory, is thus able to embellish human life through new avenues of adornment.

The great seer-sage Maharishi Aurobindo had once said to his disciple Nalini Kant Gupta: "If it were to be estimated how much a country, society or person will progress in its lifetime, judge the quality and nature of its imaginations". In the golden age of *Satyug* (the era of righteousness) in India, the inhabitants lived the life of *rishi-kalpa*, i.e. in the mould of a *rishi*. Their thoughts and imaginations reverberated with *vedic* and *upanishadic mantras*. If the West today is scaling ever new heights of prosperity, the reason is the dynamism of its people's imaginations which are always geared towards bringing forth something new in the physical/material sphere.

"What could be the serviceability of imaginations for a meaningful life"? In response to this query of Nalini Kant, the Maharishi said: "Everybody should keep some important points in mind. First, do not let the standard of your imaginations deteriorate. Imaginations of sensuous indulgences or carnal pleasures should not be entertained, because this dissipates mental energy and saps vitality. Second, be steadfast in the belief that imaginations can be realized. Only, it requires planned and sustained pursuit. He who dreams without tiring, imagines without stopping and dares to stake everything on its materialization definitely meets with success; his dreams are fulfilled, his imaginations find concrete shape."

The mode of using imaginations for a meaningful and joyous life can be summed up in the following points:

- (1) Development of unique creative energies of life through imaginations. This means that you must not allow negative imaginations any access to your mind. Imagine, if you can, after raising your inner consciousness to its maximum sublimity. This will automatically lead to enhancement of original creativity.
- (2) Glimpse of the future through the eyes of imaginations. This means that you should paint a picture of your bright future using the brush of imagination and try to give concrete shape to it.
- (3) Make the personality virtuous by lofty imaginations, that is, you should visualize about the virtuous qualities lacking in the personality and consciously cultivate them and make them an integral part of your personality.
- (4) Remain immersed in those imaginations that make you calm and joyful, and banish those that give disquiet and pain.
- (5) Make imaginations your companions in solitude, that is, utilize your moments of aloneness in pious and emotive imaginations. If you pour your heart

into these imaginations, it will gradually develop into *dhyana* (meditation).

- (6) Through imaginations develop insight into the secrets of life. You will find solutions to the problems of day to day life in some of new imaginations. Search for them.
- (7) Make yourself bold and strong by forceful imaginations. "I am eternal spark of the Almighty. Who in the world can harm me when my Supreme Benefactor is with me as my ever-vigilant Guardian? I am capable of doing anything by His grace" Such a firm faith gives strength to remain unruffled in the face of crises. The inner determination of a *sadhaka* is able to multiply this strength thousand times.



9

Firm determination is a mark of spiritual progress

*Yāvati dyāvāpthivi varimṇa
yāvadāpaḥ siṣyaduryāvadagnih
Tatasvamasi jyāyān viśvaha mahānstasmai
te kāma nama it kñomi.*

- Atharvaveda 9/2/20

O will power! You are vaster than the extent of heaven and earth, and the expanse of water, and the spread of fire. You are ever great. I bow to you.

The power inherent in will or determination is basically spiritual in nature. When a person shapes his imaginations with the chisel of intellect, cuts through the tangle of their web and converts their multiplicity into singleness, when all imaginations converge into one, only then determination starts to sprout. When all the emotions of heart, the entire vital force of the being and all the mental energies are poured into it, this tender shoot grows to become stout. The entire existence, the whole personality comes to rest on it. Only in the lives of those who are able to do so, miracles of the power of determination are seen to happen.

Inner determination does not develop in those whose personality is unintegrated and whose inner energy currents are flowing randomly in different directions. Such persons lack concentration, resolve and competence. For them, determination is merely a word which has no meaning. They will begin any work but are unable to stay with it for long, and abandon the task midway on some excuse or the other. If they cannot catch hold of a solid pretext, the lame plea of boredom or ennui is always handy to rescue them. Such persons do make resolves at the drop of a hat but simultaneously keep many options ready, whereas resolve or determination is a condition of optionlessness. Once the determination is made, its goal has got to be fulfilled. It should become synonymous with life, its whole identity and definition, the alter ego. One has to live for it and die for it; there can be no separate existence. Only in those persons in whose inner depths such complete conviction grows, there is a meaningful and full development of determination.

Once we are firmly resolved and make an inner determination to achieve something, we immerse ourselves completely in the task of completing it. Come numerous obstacles, endless criticisms, or great sufferings, we do not allow our resolve to be shaken or diluted, and continue with our ceaseless striving till the resolve is fulfilled. The truth is that those who lead a spiritual life and look upon the omnipotent God as their controller and benefactor find the hindrances, too, ultimately turning into indirect aids to their efforts. These challenges, in fact, go to increase their strength and act as a spur for heightened effort. It is only in the absence of spiritual disposition that obstacles are able to disappoint and dispirit us, and our determination gradually wanes and breaks.

It is necessary to identify the reasons that lead to the disintegration of the resolve because only by such identification can we circumvent them. The chief among these is the habit of worrying or brooding. We are wont to forget that this world is an objectification of the grand divine design and is controlled by that very Divine Will. He who overlooks this truth lacks in total devotion to God. Consequently, mind becomes stuffed with all sorts of anxieties, tensions and confusions. When this brooding tendency becomes chronic, the feeling of mental torment becomes a permanent feature, howsoever comfortably placed we may otherwise be. The inner determination of such a person is always weak.

Apprehension, doubt, fear and impatience are some of the other factors that enfeeble the resolve by making a person pessimist. The world has a relative existence. Every phenomenon here has both positive and negative aspects and one can have positive or negative attitude towards any circumstances. If we become adept in optimistic thinking, our inner strengths go on increasing and so does our determination. On the contrary, if we allow ourselves to remain in the grip of pessimistic thinking only, the power of determination progressively weakens.

The counsel of Master Mahashaya, a disciple of Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansa, is very pertinent in this connection. Master Mahashaya was among the closest disciples of Sri Sri Thakur. His spiritual faculties had developed fully by the blessings of the *guru*. Once a novitiate of Belur *Math* wished to know from him the secret of spiritual life. In response, Master Mahashaya said: "Listen son, if you have ever to know how much spiritually evolved a person is, examine how much developed his power of determination is" Master Mahashaya then proceeded to outline some important guidelines for increasing this power. These are:

- (1) Accept your failures with grace and maturity. We become unsuccessful for want of firm determination. So, after every failure, make an intensive introspection. Instead of foisting your shortcomings on others, accept them and rectify.

- (2) Grow tall in the real sense. This means that you should enlarge your virtues rather than ego. Increase in will power will be a natural corollary.
- (3) Welcome the tests and trials God puts us to. Believe it, every suffering in life comes to improve our ability. If the sufferings are faced stoically and dealt with correctly, inner determination grows.
- (4) Learn the proper mode of dealing with antagonists and bad persons. As long as we are in this world, we will have to learn to deal with all kinds of persons including those who are our opponents and are malicious. Be magnanimous and tolerant in your behavior towards them too. Concern yourself only with the positive aspects of their lives; keep aloof from the negative ones.
- (5) Start *tapa*. It plays a big role in augmenting the power of determination. Regimens of fasting (*upavas*), tasteless food (*asvad*) and silence (*mauna*) etc lead to rapid growth in mental resolve. In this process, there is crucial importance of tender emotions. Those, whose emotions are God-oriented, their resolves never remain unfulfilled.



10

Know the essence of tender emotions

*Aham tas̄eva vandhuram paryachāmi hdā matim.
Kuvitomasyāpāmiti.*

- Rigveda 10/119/5

As the carpenter mends the sitting arena of the chariot, so do I refine my intellect with my (pure) heart. Have I, indeed, consumed soma?

Tender emotions are the pivot of *jivana sadhana*. All the virtues in life flow from and revolve around them. It is emotions that give the sense of contentment in life. Whatever new heights of development and progress are scaled in disregard of emotions will leave a nagging feeling of emptiness and vacuity. All the acquisitions of wealth, power, respect and honour fail to give inner satisfaction; the interior always feels thirsty for something else. The lack of emotional warmth makes one feel penurious in the midst of opulence. This is intensely felt by those who have seen their sentiments being crushed to pieces, whose trusts have been betrayed in life, who have longed for some warmth and got none, and who have suffered in silence the agony of repeated emotional blows. Their vacant eyes and throbbing hearts are pointers to the fact that emotional pains dissolve like a slow poison in life. From this poisonous admixture spring innumerable mental disorders. The origin of all psychological ailments lies in hidden, crushed, betrayed and tormented emotions.

On the other hand, if there is a proper sprouting of emotions in life and they are nurtured with care and love, miraculous changes are inevitable. Such persons become masters of innumerable virtues and the fragrance of their personalities permeates the whole surrounding. Not only they themselves feel contented but even those in their contact and vicinity find their lives becoming meaningful and joyous. This is so because it is the golden truth of life that where the magnetic force of emotional sensitivity is

very intense, there is a continual and proportionate generation of virtues. Contrariwise, wherever insensitivity grows, there is a matching upsurge of vices and evil tendencies all around.

The aspiring minds may want to know how to create tender emotions in life, how to feel emotional contentment? The answer is very simple. The flow of tender emotions increases by expression, but dries up by suppressing. It is a type of wealth which the more you spread around, the richer you become, but a niggardly attitude leaves you a destitute. Hence the seekers of emotional fulfillment are advised that rather than trying to get the warmth of someone else's emotions, they give out their own warm emotions to the needy and the sufferers. The result of this pious and selfless action will be, in all circumstances, highly satisfying.

The words of a holy seer in the spiritual life of India, Swami Ramtirtha, are very enlightening in this context. Those days he was in America. His personality, a confluence of *tapa*, wisdom and love, had acquired a divine magnetism. Countless number of people rushed to him in distress and returned with a smile. One day a woman came to him, she was a picture of gloom and despondence. Someone had sent her to Swami Ramtirtha. Come she had somehow, but was unable to speak anything. Deep depression had made her tongue-tied. For a long moment she remained sitting statue-like, saying nothing. Swami

Ramtirtha, too, said nothing to her, only kept gazing at her with compassion in his eyes. This silent shower of compassion and empathy melted the ice of accumulated pain, and it began to pour out of her eyes. She kept weeping and weeping and Ramtirtha kept looking at her with affection. The panacea of love and understanding gradually enabled her to regain her voice. With tears in her eyes and throat, she narrated her story. Its gist was that after sacrificing everything money, body, mind, life, she had been betrayed and had got only dejection in return.

After patiently listening to her, Ramtirtha spoke somberly: "Sister, everyone in this world behaves according to the level of his capability. One's physical, mental, intellectual and emotional capacities bound and circumscribe him and limit his conduct to the available measure. Those whose emotions are soiled in selfishness and venality are only worthy of forgiveness. They should be forgiven with a loving heart. Very helpless are these poor souls" "Is it impossible, in that case, to get true love in life"? The woman asked. "No, it is not so, "Swami Ramtirtha replied, "true love comes, but only to those who know how to love truly" "My love was also true", the visitor remonstrated. "No sister, your love had expectation. Also, there was a poisonous element of lust dissolved in it, whereas true love appears only in the form of selfless service, compassion and reverential faith."

The woman realized the essence of Ramtirtha's words. She now knew that love is only given; it does not demand anything. Love is the name of unconditional giving. It is the name of emotions that are free of lust, longing and egoity. Having assimilated this wisdom, she joined a hospital as a nurse. Her emotions found an outlet in selfless service. When, after a long time, she met Swami Ramtirtha again, she was a transformed person. Her personality radiated a unique glow, the glow of contentment. At the same time, she was getting the goodwill of many without asking. The taste of pure love had blessed and satiated her. Really, only they who simply give, and not demand, know the essence of tender emotions. Under the soothing comfort of this effusion grow various qualities of the personality, among which is included enhancement of intellectual capability too.



11

Guidelines for sharpening the intellect

*Indra yaste navīyasīn girām mandrāmajījanat /
Cikitvinmanasām dhiyām pratnāmtasya pipyuṣīm //*

- Rigveda 8/95/5

*O Supreme Lord of perfect majesty! Bless the one who ever
sings new and beautiful encomiums to you with the intellect
which is endowed with supreme wisdom and which
enlightens the mind.*

Everyone is desirous of increasing his mental and intellectual capabilities. This craving is more endemic to the student community. Most of them are on the lookout for some formula or technique that may enhance their mental power. It is seen in all spheres of life that the more intelligent are able to make progress and achieve success while the dullards are left behind in the race. This phenomenon has become almost a truism, to the extent that intelligence and success have come to be viewed as synonymous.

How may the unintelligent become intelligent? And how can the intelligent ones further increase their brainpower? The answers to these questions have never been properly known or learnt. The results of research investigations made in this field generally remain unavailable to the common mass of people. Ignorant of the effective tools of intellect development, the majority of people resign themselves to their present mental level, branding it as destiny or fate. But the reality is otherwise. With the grace of God, combined with dedicated human endeavor, worthwhile goal is achievable.

But before we embark on this venture, let us be clear about what exactly is meant by intellectual capacity. Most people have a misconception about the true nature and function of the intellect. They identify intelligence with trickery and chicanery of all sorts. For them, being intelligent means an ability to fix things up and grab the desired object by hook or by crook. But those who are aware of the reality know that intellect or *buddhi* is, in fact, an instrument manifesting as a process of analysis, deliberation and discernment. An application of this process

leads to the development of understanding, determination and far-sightedness.

Analysis is made of the prevailing circumstances, available facts and the past experience. It helps in giving a right direction to the course. Deliberation means refining the thoughts and imaginations, properly arranging them and giving them a focused orientation. Discernment is the faculty to discriminate between the right and the wrong, the judicious and the injudicious, the true and the false. One in whom all these three dimensions of intellect are harmoniously activated is endowed with an outstanding capacity of understanding. He is able to perform the right action at the right time. He can easily untangle complex issues and situations. His decisions are quick and accurate, and stand the test of time. There is a spontaneous development of farsightedness and perspicacity in him. His clear-sighted competent mind seldom fails to make correct assessment about the future course of events.

In this context, the thoughts of the great seer, scholar and indologist Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj are worth reflection. The name of Gopinath Kaviraj should not be unfamiliar to whoever has an interest in Indian culture, philosophy and the science of spirituality. Kavirajji was, besides being a great scholar, also an advanced *sādhak* (spiritual seeker). Once, while he was a professor, a student met him. Him was very unhappy, frustrated and depressed; Kavirajji called him at his residence and very attentively heard his tale of woes. The student's problem was that in spite of regularly attending the classes he was unable to grasp the lessons being taught. In other

spheres of activity, too, he felt intellectually handicapped. This sense of inadequacy had even driven him to suicidal attempts.

Gopinathji was deeply touched by his plight and encouraged him: "You need not get perturbed by this. The Mother of the universe who transformed an ignoramus like Kalidas into a great poet will also bless you with a sharpened intellect. Only you will have to make some efforts for this." The boy gazed at him hopefully. Gopinathji continued: "The first step in increasing the mental ability is steadiness. Beware that it is our flickering and instable dispositions that act as a hindrance to intellectual development. To surmount this obstacle, it is necessary that you practice three hours of continuous study daily, albeit increasing the period slowly and gradually. When the body is steady, the mind also becomes stable, and this is conducive to the development of intellect. The next stage in this sequence is concentration of the mind. For this, it is essential for you to focus totally on the subject of your study. Even if you are unable to follow it, keep on trying to grasp the meaning with full concentration and diligence. A continued practice of concentrating the mind will automatically increase your power of comprehension".

Besides these two main elements, there are many subsidiary points; namely (1) curiosity, i.e. an earnest desire to know more and more about a thing; (2) company of the wise - we should try to cultivate contact with the learned, the thinking, and the intelligent persons; (3) self-encouragement - rather than wallow in pessimistic thoughts, it would be necessary to develop confidence in one's own ability; (4) functional utility - we should

try to know the functional utility of the knowledge we want to acquire; an awareness of such practical applicability makes the subject more easily comprehensible; (5) pool of knowledge - acquisition of information from different sources also helps in the development of intellect; (6) deep insight - if you cultivate a keen eye, you will realize that the whole nature and our entire surroundings are imparting some lesson every moment; (7) student mentality one should consider oneself a perpetual learner and always remain eager to learn new things; (8) faith in the Divine Grace it compensates for the deficiencies and drawbacks and makes life meaningful.

The *Gāyatrī Mahāmantra* is the bestower of *sadbuddhi* (the righteous intellect). By taking recourse to this powerful *mantra*, innumerable persons with poor intellect have been able to acquire superior intelligence. A regular chanting of this *mahāmantra* leads to steadiness of body and mind and one-pointed concentration. Besides, the subtle and powerful vibrations generated by the *mahāmantra* activate and energize the whole nervous system. The correct method of *Gāyatrī sādhanā* and its processes can be learnt by reading *Gāyatrī Mahavijñana* (The Super Science of *Gāyatrī*) which has been published by Shanti kunj, Haridwar. The *sādhanā* of the elemental force of *Gāyatrī* is not only beneficial for the development of intellect but is also a sure-shot recipe for enhancing the memory power.



12

How to enrich our creative talents and memory?

Yām medhāṁ devagaṇāḥ pitaraścopāsate

Tayā māmadya medhayāgne medhāvināṁ kuru svāhā

-Yajurveda 32/14

O Fire - God incarnate! Bestow on me the brilliance (of intellect), which is prayed for by the gods and the spirits of the ancestors through devout adoration.

Everyone is interested to find some sure - shot formula to increase memory power. The student community, in particular, feels its need more acutely. How to memorize a lesson fast? How to retain and not forget what has been learnt? Such questions keep cropping up in the minds of students. In search of their answers, they indulge in all sorts of tactics, including recourse to some medicines/drugs.

The drug companies, too, on their part exploit this vulnerability of the students. Through attractive and high power advertisements and false promises of miracles they are ever eager to make a fast buck. It is not known whether the really needy ever derive any benefit or not from the advertised drugs. This much, however, is certain that the so-called recipe of strong memory remains a much sought after mirage.

In this connection, we should know and for certain that such wishful miracles do not happen anywhere in the universe. Every action, every event is defined and regulated by set rules of cosmic order, be they in the realm of physical laws or the spiritual. The same principle operates with respect to memory. This has a science of its own, its own techniques. Those who know and understand it are able to derive benefit easily, while the ignorant ones waste their time in futile ventures and feel disappointed on crucial occasions. SO it is better that one should thoroughly understand the correct techniques of firmly committing some thing to memory and use them properly.

Those who suffer from memory problems have some standard complaints: What can I do, I just cannot memorize; I

had indeed memorized this, but forgot it; I can recollect but only piecemeal, and so on and so forth. There are contrary claims too

of committing a thing to memory in just one reading, or recollecting exactly every detail of what had been read, or memories of long bygone times being still vivid in the mind etc.

There is an instructive anecdote, which will help in understanding these diametrically opposite statements relating to memory function. This anecdote is from the life of Vivekanand. Those days Swami ji was in *pravrajya* (ascetical wanderings) within India. He had a *gurubhai* (brother disciple of a common teacher) as companion. A continuous routine of *swadhyaya* (self-study), *satsang* (company of the truth seekers) and rigorous *tapa* (austerities) was being followed. Whenever he could lay his hand upon a good book, Vivekanand would not miss reading it. In every new place, his first search was a good library, and when he came across one he would make full utilization of its treasures. At one place, in course of this *pravrajya*, a library impressed him much and he decided to stay at the place for an extended period. His *gurubhai* would fetch for him a variety of books in Sanskrit and English, which the Swamiji would return the next day after reading them. This routine of issuing fresh books daily and quite voluminous ones at that- and receiving the same the very next day perplexed the librarian. He enquired of the *gurubhai*: “Do you take all these books daily only to took over them cursorily? If so, I will show them to you here itself, why carry so much weight all the way to your place of stay? Hearing this remark of the librarian, the *gurubhai* replied in all seriousness: “It is not as you think. My *gurubhai* does read these books seriously before returning

them" Surprised at this reply, the librarian said: "If it is so, I would very much like to meet the gentleman".

The next day, Swamiji met him and said: "Sir, do not be perplexed. I have not only gone through the books, but have also memorized their contents". Having said so, he handed him back some previously issued books and repeated verbatim many important passages from them. For the librarian, this spectacle was nothing short of a miracle. Very humbly, he asked Swami ji the secret of his super-human memory. Swami ji laughed and said: "There is no miracle or mystery in this. It is simply a technique of mental concentration"

This technique has certain stages. The first stage is that whatever is read or listened to should be with a calm, composed and concentrated mind. Indeed, the sense organs are mere doors through which messages are sent to the mind. It is the mind which is the real thing. The more the holding power or capability of the mind, the more the information which can be imprinted on it. In fact, memorizing something or recollecting it is but a mere process, which is called memory (*smriti*). But the storehouse of memory is talent or intelligence (*medha*). In each individual, this talent exists in direct proportion to his mental composure, tranquility and concentration. For this very reason, things read, heard or seen in a hurry, or in state of instability, or casually and perfunctorily do not register in the mind.

The more clearly and deeply a thing is imprinted on the substratum of mind, the more vivid and detailed its recollection will be. If for some reason, this imprint is not clear in one

attempt, the process should be repeated. It will be helpful if the important points are jotted down, since the process of writing, by itself, generates steadiness and concentration. The third important point in connection with memory power is that one should be conceptually clear about the subject or points which are sought to be memorized, because it is easy to retain in memory those facts or events which touch our inner chord. Interest in and aptitude for the subject matter is another important consideration; again concentration comes as a matter of course when the topic is of interest to us. In addition to all these, an essential requisite is that our nervous system be stable and strong. Those who lead a regulated and disciplined life are found to have a sharp memory and they can also absorb information very fast. One cannot lay too much emphasize on the distinct correlation between an orderly and disciplined life style and highly developed and sharpened memory as well as creative abilities.



13

Let creative potentials materialize fully

*Manase chetase dhiya ākūtaya uta chittaye
Matyai śrutāya chakṣase vidhema haviṣā vayam.*

- Atharvaveda 6/41/1

We worship by havi (altar offerings) for the power of reflection (mental inspirations and emotions), for consciousness and contemplation, for spiritual intellect (concentration), for inner resolves (miscellaneous stimuli), for intelligence, for powers of memory, hearing (learning), and sight (manifestation).

Mental consciousness is the source of all creative potentials. In the fertile soil of mind sprout forth various kinds of creative urges. With proper nurturing and nourishment they grow to maturity and make a very impressive impact in the arena of practical life. Such persons are honored by the world as geniuses. They not only bring laurels to themselves but the whole world benefits from their invaluable contributions. It is this secret that lies behind the extra-ordinary talent of those luminaries whose amazing stories we keep reading in the annals of human civilization.

Music, painting, dance, drama, architecture, sculpture, sports, management, researches all these are multi-dimensional expressions of human creativity. No form of these expressions is inferior to or lesser than the others; it is simply a matter of priority, skill and distinction. Talent develops any of the creative potentials to a high level. It is the source of all the glories and possessions of the world. Wealth, honor, power, fame, everything flows from this fountainhead of talent. Its absence begets only endless tumbles, rejections and slights. Everyone wants to cultivate proximity to the meritorious, while the meritless is shunned by all.

Those who have been able to develop their latent creative potentials are like shining stars in the human firmament. Their extraordinary achievements and glory act as beacons of inspiration for others. People longingly gaze at these luminaries, quite oblivious of the fact that many such potential stars are hidden in their own interiors too. Only,

their brightness has to be brought to the fore. Then they, too, can sparkle and shower their illumination on the world. For this only the potential lying within has to be developed and awakened.

But how? "I have nothing like this in me", "I do not see any distinction in me" One often comes across negative refrains of this type. Such persons are advised to look within once again a little more minutely and deeply, and also objectively.

The moment we do it, we will definitely notice something special in us, something that distinguishes us from others and makes us unique. It could be that there exists in us no philosopher or scientist, in whose anticipated uncovering we have been making futile searches and finally got tired. It is possible instead that in some remote corner of our inner space a budding sportsman, or a musician, or a singer may be dimly twinkling but whom we have always overlooked and are paying no heed even today. Remember, there is an inexhaustible store of creative energy in everyone. God is not partial. He has not deprived anyone in this whole creation of his grace. Believe it, you are unique in yourself, and this uniqueness is the creative potential which always yearns inside you for release. This yearning is the originality of our lives. Only, it has to be awakened, developed and properly channelized.

To the souls who are immersed in dejection, an anecdotal story of Sri Aurobindo *Ashram*, Pondicherry will be

inspiring. Those days the head of the *ashram* was Sri Ma (the Mother) herself. The selection of the students of the *ashram's* school was made by her which she did with her inner vision. It is well known that the mode of education there is quite different from the normal pattern obtaining elsewhere. Teachers live there as companions of students and nurture the latter's potentialities. In one particular batch, a student was very indisciplined and mischievous, and had made all the teachers an exasperated lot.

The matter was finally reported to Sri Ma. After hearing everything, the Mother smiled and said: "You people could not recognize the real potential of the boy. There is a painter hidden in him. We have to bring that to the surface" The teachers asked: "Mother, how should one recognize one's creative potential and develop it"? The Mother said: "Its method is very simple. There is, of course, a sea of potentialities latent in everybody, but there is also something special or exceptional among that. This very exceptional entity is the originality or unique talent of the person which subconsciously goads and stimulates him again and again. This could be music, painting, science or any other thing. To recognize it, we should try to perceive the subtle sensations arising in the inner mind."

Once this potentiality has been perceived, practical steps should be taken for its nurturing. If some one, for example, has a natural flair for writing, he should not kill the emerging waves of thoughts, ideas or emotions in him. He should keep a diary with him and note them down. At the

same time, he should keep alive the inclination for study and contemplation so that he remains in touch with the other currents of thoughts circulating in the world. He should also earmark a time for writing regularly so as to give effective expression to his budding talent. It is likely that this expression may not be very good in the beginning, but with time, it will improve and gain maturity. This process applies to other fields too. For the right and meaningful expression of these creative potentials, it is also necessary that the direction of creative thinking be fixed too.

14

*Creativity is developed
by noble and
positive thoughts*

*A no bhadrah kratavo yantu viśvato adabdhāso aparītāsaa⁷ udbhidah.
Devā no yathā sadmid vdhe asannaprāyuvo rakṣitāro dive-dive.*

Yajurveda 25/14

“Let benevolent, harmless, free and fruitful ideas come to us from all sides, so that the vigilant and protector gods continually make us prosper.”

Creative thinking is always oriented towards the good of all. Creative thinking means developing such a cast of mind which remains untouched by envy, anger, greed and other such destructive dispositions. Only a mind pulsating with positive emotions of joy, good will, equality, peace and forgiveness is the creative mind, because only in such a mind the creative impulses are at their peak. Not only this, even the physical health does not remain unaffected by its beneficial effects.

The mind casts a direct impact upon our nervous system and the various organs of the body. Even the surroundings are affected by one's mental state. The emanating thought currents are potent enough to influence them. If the mind is pure, refined and energetic creative thinking reaches such an exalted level that its effect may endure for centuries. Great personages have been able to inspire and induce great changes in the world on the strength of their powerful cast of mind.

Remember, thoughts are shot from the mind like boomerangs. After piercing the target they come back to the person generating those thoughts. So, if we are sending out good, positive and creative thought signals, they travel through the world of ideas and reach the intended persons. These thought signals return to us carrying with them the blessings, goodwill and greetings of the people and make us feel inspired, elated and encouraged.

Conversely, when destructive and negative thoughts fly towards the target, they bring negative reactions. If the target happens to be more powerful, the negative thoughts fail to

penetrate them and boomerang on us with double speed. Even if they succeed in denting the target, they still return and hit us with negative vibes.

Projection of noble thoughts gradually elevates the mind whereas negative thoughts put it on a downward slide. Consequently, many reactions ensue which ultimately give birth to mental/psychological disorders. Experts of *Ayurveda* see a direct link between the *nadi* system and the mind. If our thoughts are pure, the *nadis* (nerve channels) open up and there is free flow of vital energy through them, whereas their functioning becomes unbalanced under the impact of impure thoughts. This inharmony in the flow of vital airs disrupts and destabilizes even normal physiological functions and the body falls prey to many diseases. In short, be it the body or mind, it is continually inspired and influenced by thought currents. This is self-evident in literal sense, too, and can be observed on people's faces. Whenever the feelings of joy and hope arise in the mind, the face reciprocates by radiating a perceptible glow. A malicious thought, on the other hand, makes the face dull and twisted. That is why, those whose minds always carry the burden of negative thoughts have their facial features giving a permanently contorted and crooked look.

The experience of Kuldanand Brahmachari, a disciple of Bengal's renowned saint Vijay Krishna Goswami, may be recounted here. Kuldanand would remain very perturbed in the initial stages of his *sadhana* by the persistence of destructive thoughts in his mind. The more he tried to get rid of them, the more they would surround and haunt him like ghosts. In deep

despair, he even entertained the idea of suicide, but then it occurred to him to seek the *guru's* help.

He went to Goswamiji and sobbed out his agony to him: "*Gurudev*, resolved I indeed was for *sadbhana*, but my mental plight is proving worse than that of animals. Base thoughts of sensuous pleasures, envy, jealousy, ego, etc. have infested my mind and refuse to go away. The situation has now become intolerable. Death is preferable to such a life. So I think I better die now".

Vijay Krishna Goswami caressed Kulanand's head and comforted him: "This is inverse thinking, son! It is your mind which is the culprit. Rather than reform it, you intend to punish your body. If you have to reform, reform your mind; if you have to punish, punish your mind" "But how?" Kulanand wanted to know. In reply, his *gurudev* instructed him in the technique of creative thinking. He said: "It is imperative that you stop regarding yourself weak and helpless. You have to believe that you are an *amśa* (spark) of the Effulgent Divine. His cosmic consciousness is flowing inside you. As this perception becomes strong, you will feel a surge of inner strength and be able to rein in the negative flight of your thoughts. This is the first step in the direction of creative thinking".

To make this check on the mind effective and enduring, you will have to forsake the tendency to find justifications and pretexts such as the hand of fate or destiny. Whenever negative thoughts arise to tighten this grip over the mind, brush them

aside with firm determination. The second step is 'replacement'. After driving out negative thoughts, they should be replaced by noble and pious thoughts. This could be in the form of remembrance of some personal deity or *guru*. The third stage is 'refinement'. When the process of replacement is made continuous, refinement begins automatically.

One more thing to be kept in mind is that we should not remain immersed in the unpleasant thoughts of the past. Everything negative - negative events, negative deeds-must be released out of the psyche. The sooner, the better. Just contemplate on the real identity of yourself with the intrinsic feeling focused on becoming pure, enlightened and liberated. Simultaneously, unconditionally offer yourself to the Divine. This process imparts sharpness to creative thinking. To accelerate the process of this sublimation, do not forget to embrace high ideals in your life.

15

*Embrace high ideals,
achieve excellence*

*Uardhvo naḥ pāhyamhaso ni ketunā
viśvam samatrinam dah
Kdhī na urdhvāñcharathāya jīvase
vidā deveṣu no duvah.*

- Rigveda 1/36/14

O Fire-God! You are the most exalted. Save us from sinning by the light of knowledge. Burn to ashes all our selfishness. Endow us with excellence for progress and happy life. Make us worthy of honour by the gods.

If we want to strive for excellence, we will have to embrace high ideals, because without noble ideals in life there can be no *jivana sadhana* at all. Without ideals, life becomes a meaningless meandering. What is the best course of life? How to walk this course? These questions in the mind remain in futile wait for an answer. The nagging feeling of not having realized one's potential, not having used one's capacity to the full always torments. The confused and troubled life drags on somehow but there is no joy in it, no sense of contentment.

To experience the joy of living, presence of an ideal is essential in life. This ideal could be anything a pious thought, pious emotion or some pious and exalted personality. All the three are equally effective. Any of these can be chosen in accordance with one's aim in life, mentality, taste and circumstances. But whatever be the selection, one must have the courage to efface oneself at this altar. Without dissolving one's emotions, thoughts, mind and every breadth into it, the ideal does not become forceful.

Those in whose lives inspirations arose, sensibilities grew and blessings poured had all merged their entire beings in their ideals, albeit in varying ways. Mahatma Gandhi, for example, had chosen *Srimadbhagavad Gita* as his ideal and would call it *Gita Mata* (*Mother Gita*). Vinoba Bhave called it *Gitai*. The noble and profound thoughts of the *Gita* were the guiding principles of both great men. The path of their lives was *niśkāma karma* (selfless action) which they had named *anāśakti yoga* (*yoga* sans attachment). Their love for the *Gita* was so deep that they used to say: "As a mother nourishes her child with her

milk, so do I receive nourishment from the thought feeding by *Gita Mata*. Whenever I am in a fix, the *Gita Mata* comes to my aid and shows me the right way"

For Chandrashekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh, love for the nation had become the supreme ideal. They had merged all their feelings and thoughts, and every breadth of life in it. Mother India was everything for them, the *raison d'être* of their existence. They lived for Mother India, fought every moment for Her, and died for Her. By making this pious emotion their ideal, Bhagat Singh and Chandrashekhar Azad could make their lives meaningful, contented and great.

Like pious thoughts and pious emotions, a pious and noble personality, too, could be adopted as the ideal. It is not essential that he exists physically, because noble personalities are no less inspiring and effective in their unembodied existence than they were in their corporeal forms, nay, even more so, because their austere life-style increases these capacities manifold.

During the freedom movement of India many youth plunged themselves in the service of the nation with Swami Vivekanand as their ideal; many others did so for serving the people in general. The Ramkrishna Mission is a living monument of the collective identity of these very persons. It is to be borne in mind that those who embraced Vivekanand as ideal did not stop at merely chanting his name, but boldly proceeded to mould their lives after him. This indeed is the real meaning of an ideal crafting of thoughts in the ideal's mould,

embracing the values of life in conformity with that, and adoption of a pious life-style accordingly. These criteria constitute the touchstone of love for the accepted ideal of life. One has to come out with flying colours, whatever be the price, howsoever great be the suffering.

In the present age, there is the pious ideal of *Yugrishi Param Poojya Gurudev* before us all. His sparkling *tapasvi* life, the supremely high level of *jivana sadhana*, the spirit of sacrifice for the country, and the *dharma* (law of righteousness) could easily be the ideal for anybody, and it has indeed been so. Millions of persons inside the country and outside, thinkers and intellectuals, the devout and the emotional, the young and the old, and even teenagers have embraced him as an ideal, and are sincerely endeavoring to lead their lives in accordance with the standards set by him. Included among them are also many who are presently reading these lines.

Those who are already pursuing the way of life as exemplified by *Param Poojya Gurudev*, and also those who are yet to start their *jivana sadhana* can move forward in this direction. They have only to follow the regimen as any idealist is required to do. The steps in this regard are:

- (1) To read about one's chosen ideal personality, i.e. *Yugrishi Gurudev* and contemplate deeply on every aspect of his life.
- (2) To establish deep emotional bond with the ideal person, viz. *Gurudev*. This is achieved by regular contemplation.

- (3) To remain dedicated to the values of *tapa*, sacrifice, altruist service and love for the nation as demonstrated by him.

Whoever embraces this three-point scheme in his life will automatically start casting himself in the mould of *Yugrishi Gurudev*. What is more, it is the experience of such persons that even though the *sadhaka*'s outer personality remains active in the phenomenal world, his subtle consciousness hovers around *Gurudev*. What is needed is to increase one's self-confidence for the purpose of embracing this high ideal.

16

Guidelines for cultivating self-confidence

*Ahmindro na parā jīgya id dhanam
Na mrityavai va tasthe kadācan
Somminmā sunvanto yācatā vasu
Na me pūrvah sakhye riṣāthan*

Yajurveda 25/14

'I am Indra. I never face defeat. Death cannot overpower me. Those desirous of extracting somras should beseech me only. Friendliness with me can never be detrimental.'

One who wants to lead a fulfilling life should try to develop self-confidence, which is the only source of courage, success and victory. Those possessing self-confidence are capable of accomplishing anything. Difficulties, obstacles and hurdles can neither deter nor discourage them. On the contrary their courage multiplies thousand fold during adverse circumstances. They always go on marching with a positive attitude of achieving success. Circumstantial hindrances may sometimes compel them to stop or to retreat but they never get disheartened under such situations. They take a pause and restart their struggle with fresh agility and redoubled courage.

A self-confident man never accepts final failure and he never fails finally because of his confident will power. He firmly believes the grand truth of his identity as the undecaying, immortal, pious, enlightened and liberated soul. Being the child of the Almighty Lord he concretely feels himself to be the source of infinite powers. This very specific faith endows him with success in every noble endeavor. But this deep self-confidence should not give way to self-conceit. Both are entirely different. A self-conceited man attributes his success to his own mental and physical powers. Success puffs him up with pride while failure throws him into the dark dungeons of frustration. When an egotist person gets success, applause and honors he starts treating others with disdain. On the contrary, depression caused by failure starts pushing him towards cowardly suicidal tendencies.

Genuinely self-confident persons treat their achievements as godly gifts. They try their best to utilize their

talents, prosperity and powers to relieve suffering pain and distress of the needy and the helpless. Their struggle for success becomes a process to cultivate and promote virtues while failures help them to trace their own deficiencies. They do not have a tendency to grab success, credit and fame by fair means or foul. All these automatically come to them because of their virtuous qualities and attributes.

How to develop self-confidence? The truth is that we go on molding ourselves according to our own perceptions. A man who thinks himself dust is definitely trampled upon. Everybody walks over dust but none moves over glowing coal. The persons who think themselves capable of doing hardest jobs and believe in their own capabilities create favorable circumstances all around them. The moment we firmly resolve to do a job, it is already half done; while habitually indolent people go on building castles in the air like a conventional fool. Self-confident persons always ultimately achieve their goals.

Potential of a huge tree is always inherent in a small seed. This seed when sown in the soil with proper manure and water sprouts up into a large shady tree. Similarly all possibilities lie dormant within us like seeds, which can be activated into sprouting with the water of discrimination and manure of virtuous thoughts. If we are able to touch and tap unimaginable powers and capacities lying dormant within us we can very easily achieve the highest peaks of greatness.

While addressing a meeting of volunteers, Yugrishi reverend Gurudev detailed out some specific guidelines for

developing self-confidence. Practicing his inculcations in life anyone can achieve grand self-confidence. These guidelines are:

1. A firm belief and deep faith that we are immortal souls inseparable from the Supreme Spirit
2. A belief that we dormant contain all attributes of God we have just to awaken them from dormancy into activation.
3. We are capable of executing the toughest of jobs provided it is in tune with the innate attributes and qualities of our soul and the Supreme soul because a self-confident person cannot do anything unvirtuous under any circumstances.
4. Even the hardest situations of life are just a challenge and never a misfortune. Our courage should be resolutely awakened to meet the challenge.
5. Whatever we term as distress or difficulty is actually a means provided by God to awaken our will power and dormant capacities.
6. A truly self-confident man has three intrinsic qualities: determination, courage and a positive attitude of ultimate success. For him moments of struggle are welcome challenges, which develop his will power and strengthen his talents.

As regards obstructions in the path of awakening self-confidence Gurudev indicated following factors:

1. Habit of worrying. Those who always worry can never be self-confident.
2. Envious nature. In fact one feels envy only when he assumes himself inferior to others, while we all being children of God are uniquely equal.
3. Doubts and suspicions do not let us concentrate and rely on us.
4. Those who suffer from fear of uncertainties and apprehensions always lack self-confidence.

Get rid of these vicious tendencies and inculcate the qualities of self-confidence and self-esteem.

Develop self-respect

*Sam chedhyasvāgne pra cha vardhayemāṁ
uchcha tiṣṭha mahate saubhagāya
Māte riṣannupasattāro agne
brahmāṇaste yaśasah santu mānye*

- Atharvaveda 2/6/2

O Fire-God Agni! You are resplendent. Make this sacrificer (me) prosperous. Rise for bestowing great fortune. O Agni! May your worshippers never perish. May the singers of your glory be honoured.

The meaning of self-respect is inherent in self-dignity. It is experienced only by those who are conscious of their virtue-based dignity and never deviate from it. Those who care a fig for their dignity and readily stoop low for the slightest gain are always deprived of it. Self-respect is never given by others; it is self-earned. It is not the name of some civic honour, or columns of praise in newspapers. It is a very private experience which takes place in our inner consciousness. The experiencers of this feeling remain happy and contented irrespective of whether or not they are getting worldly laurels. Those bereft of this feeling always suffer from an undefined emptiness and dissatisfaction within inspite of getting all the worldly honours and praises.

To emerge out of this dissatisfaction, the only way is to re-invent self-dignity and redefine self-respect, because the outer identity, of which people are normally aware, is in no way conducive to the process of *jivana sadhana*.

Normally, respect for the ego or I-sense is taken to be self-respect. Even the smallest slight to the ego is deemed a blow to self-respect. This being so, it is but natural for a 'self-respecting' person to avoid any such activity as will hurt his ego. This erroneous identification has made the society's elite shun physical labour, because this is supposed to be a domain of the downtrodden and the lowly placed; how can the so-called 'respectable' people do it!

From the overlap of ego and self-respect have sprung many evil practices in the realms of individual and social lives. Man is so deeply immersed in false sense of ego regarding caste,

clan and lineage that he has detached himself from normal human values and behaviour. In trifling matters his ego gets hurt, and he is bent upon punishing the offender. Of late, new lows have been reached and even killings are being done in the name of protecting the honour of caste and family.

To reverse this perverse trend, it is necessary to redefine a noble emotion like self-respect. Self-respect is the ineffaceable line of normative bounds which must not be violated in any condition. Right conduct and righteous qualities define our self-respect. Noble sentiments and sublime values of life are its symbols. Their correct awareness, unshakable faith in them, and full alertness about the inviolability of their norms exemplify our self-respect. If we act accordingly, we feel honoured in ourselves and experience an exhilarating pride within, while a converse behaviour drags us into the gloom of self-pity and remorse.

There are many events in the life of *Yugrishi Poojya Gurudev* which make the essential meaning of this truth evident. The incident being mentioned here is of his Mathura days. Gayatri Tapobhumi had come into existence. *Gurudev* alongwith *Vandaniya Mataji* regularly participated in the morning *yajña*. That day also when he reached for *yajña* at the appointed time, his eyes fell on dog's excreta lying near the Tapobhumi gate. The passers-by were making their way around it.

He observed this proceeding silently for a few minutes. Then without saying anything to anybody he moved towards the gate and before others could react, he had cleaned the excreta

and washed the place thoroughly. After this, he went for bath and having made himself clean and pure again returned to the *yajñashala*.

Those who were witness to all this felt awkward. Why did *Gurudev* have to do this work himself? He could have told a cleaning staff or some worker. Such thoughts arose in many minds but none was bold enough to mention this to him. *Gurudev*, of course, in his inner vision was aware of these thoughts passing through their minds. After *purnāhuti* (concluding offering of oblation) he addressed them: "Gayatri Tapobhumi is the holy *peeth* (seat) of Mother Gayatri. It is home to all of us. Its cleanliness is also the duty of us all. Live we will in it but clean it somebody else - what could be more shameful than this?"

Having said this *Gurudev* looked at those present and continued: "To clean excreta is a matter of self-respect for me. Loss in self-respect comes from tolerating filth and looking up to others for its removal". He warned on this occasion that self-respect increases by inculcation of the attributes required, for self-development. By neglecting these attributes, we can only become hypocritic egoists. The sense of self-respect comes to those who serve the needy, give comfort to others and whose hearts are brimming with noble sentiments. Ask yourself daily how much you have moved forward in this direction today. This continued introspection and self-evaluation *vis-à-vis* inner qualities will lead to the emergence of true self-respect.

18

Development of virtues - the only touchstone for self-evaluation

*Yathā makśā idam madhu nyājanti madhāvadhi
Evā me aśvinā varchastejo balamojaścha dhriyatam*

- Atharvaveda 9/1/17

"As the honey-bees add freshly collected honey to the previous accumulation; even so O Ashvini Devas! may knowledge, brilliance, strength and power abide in me (my virtues be continually augmented)."

We should continually engage in evaluating ourselves to see what is the pace of the development of virtuous qualities in our lives, because only this is the true touchstone of *jivana sadhana*. The speed with which virtues grow in us also determines the speed with which our *jivana sadhana* sharpens and matures, our inner strengths awaken, our life progresses towards success and prosperity, glory and fame reverberate in the arena of life, a refreshing new surge of promise, verve and enthusiasm is felt, and every nook of our inner being is filled with the fragrance of joy and contentment. But all this will happen only by enrichment of virtues and by the meaningful pursuit of *jivana sadhana*.

Worldly people evaluate themselves on the touchstone of wealth and luxuries rather than virtues. For them, success, honour and power are everything irrespective of how and through what unjust means these have been acquired. They consider cunningness, chicanery, deception and flattery as valid means of success and are ignorant of the true art and joy of life.

It is the concretely experienced truth of those who are privy to the mystical essence of life that worthwhile successes are always the result of *tapa* and *punya* (virtuous deeds) whether done recently or in some remote past. May be, we have forgotten the past now, but it does not matter. Vibrations set in motion by an action never perish. Energy is indestructible; its manifest forms keep on changing though. Good and bad actions both bear certain fruits. Good actions are the field expressions of our virtues and bad actions of vices. These action-seeds may, however, take time to fructify. This time lag

depends on the germinating potential of the action-seed as well as fertility of the soil of inner consciousness. But in their due time, good and bad results, as the case may, are a certainty.

When the individual, ignorant of this truth takes recourse to sinful means and achieves some success, he forgets that he is, in fact, enjoying the fruits of some of his own good deeds done in the past. Even if he had not resorted to any immoral means now he would still have reaped these fruits, albeit after some time. In his impatience, he has unnecessarily injected bad deeds in the fruit of his success and made it contaminated. This contamination has reduced the life-span of this success and it will end prematurely while, otherwise, it would have endured for long.

Those who put forth contrary arguments should know that if success and prosperity depended on wrong means, then their practitioners should never fail, nor any person with vices ever suffer downfall. But it is not so. Every wrong-doer comes under the inexorable law of sowing-and-reaping. When this situation arises, all accomplishments desert him, and all misdeeds of the past accumulated and sins start showing results. Hence wrong means or bad actions can never be the parameter of success or evaluation of life.

There is only one touchstone of self-evaluation presence of virtues, and the only true source from which they spring is the individual's noble emotions. The more the flow of these emotions in a person, the more there will be flourishing of virtues in him. But if the emotions have impurities, vices will

soon start thriving. *Yugrishi Gurudev* used to say: "Wherever there is sensitivity, there will arise rows of virtues spontaneously. On the other hand, where there is insensitivity, there will grow a crop of vices before long".

In the days *Gurudev* used to live in Akhand Jyoti Sansthan at Mathura, a person came to him one day. He was sincerely remorseful of his wrong doings and vices. He truthfully confessed to *Gurudev* all his past misdeeds and expressed his desire to turn over a new leaf in life. But he did not know where and how to begin, and how could he know whether or not he was reforming. *Gurudev* replied very affectionately: "Son! If you want to be a good man, render selfless service to somebody daily without any expectation. Selfless service breaks the bonds of the ego and generates pious sentiments. Daily regimen of selfless service sounded difficult to the man. He pleaded: "*Gurudev*, I have large scale business dealings which keep me very busy. It is possible that I may not find time daily for such service" "In that case", *Gurudev* advised, "you pray to God for somebody. But this prayer should be honest, guileless and selfless. It should be your conscious attempt that you are able to pray even for the one who is your antagonist. This selfless prayer, too, will promote the growth of virtuous qualities in you."

One should evaluate oneself on the basis of the intensity of faith with which selfless service or selfless prayer is being offered and the honesty of one's feelings. Elimination of insensitivity and enrichment of emphatic sensitivities are the true criteria on which one can test oneself because it is

sensitivities or emotions that are the well-spring of austere life and virtuous deeds. Noble emotions and noble deeds ultimately make a man successful in all his righteous pursuits. Keep testing yourself on this standard and after every success do not forget to ask: "Success! But is it through righteous means?"

19

Key to all - round success

*Kritam me daksine haste jayo me savya ahitah /
Gojid bhuyasamaśvajid Dhananjayo hiranyajit //*

- Atharva Veda 7/50/8

“I have self effort in my left hand and victory in the right one. I can win cows, horses money and gold i.e. I am capable of achieving prosperity through focused self effort.”

How to be successful in our undertakings? This question frequently comes up in every mind, especially in the minds of youths. In childhood every thing looks like a fairyland. Many ambitions spring up in mind and subside but with the advent of youth a strong urge for getting in the chosen field of endeavor becomes strong and insistent. They go on trying to find new avenues of success but only a few actually succeed. There are many who give up as utter failures and go on lamenting their ill luck for their plight.

Many persons believe that success depends on luck. Such persons go on repeating the maxim "*Bhagya phalati Sarvda*" (Success is always achieved by luck). Persons with such an entrenched attitude of negativity slip into a mode of habitual laziness and indolence.

For persons blindly depending on luck success is only a coincidence. It has no scientific procedure without any systematic process. Such indolent persons do not know the real meaning and purport of luck. What we call luck is the result of our past actions. Virtuous actions result in good luck while evil actions fructify as ill luck. The results of our past actions known as luck can be altered by our present actions. Our ill-luck can be undone by our present virtuous actions and converted into good luck, while our evil actions weaken our good luck and take no time in converting it into bad luck.

Only those who know the importance of the great maxim. "We are the makers of our own destiny" move fast towards all round success -material as well as spiritual. There is an effective

procedure for success with its constituent factors. These factors are mainly seven, like the seven continents, seven *chakras* and seven worlds. Energy streams of these seven elements give us the glory of success in life. These are:

1. Sustained hard work along with unshakable self-confidence.
2. Unwavering faith in divine grace.
3. Firm determination to achieve the object of pursuit.
4. Undaunted courage to go on pursuing the goal in spite of setback.
5. Art of warm relationship.
6. Equanimity in the phase of difficulties.
7. Exuberating cheerfulness.

When these qualities become part and parcel of our life they gradually bestow on us sevenfold successes. These are:

1. Material prosperity
2. Impersonal excellence.
3. Emotional maturity.
4. Holistic health
5. Sharp penetrating and clear sighted intelligence.
6. Intuitive perception.
7. Spiritual growth.

This is a universally well-tried and tested experience. We can also do an experiment.

Yugrishi Pandit ShriRam Sharma Acharya helped thousands of persons achieve all-round success in their lives. In

Gaytari Parivar there are thousands of parijans who have risen from persons of modest means to become multi-millionaire. Similarly a number of persons of ordinary looking mental caliber have become highly learned scholars. This became possible as a result of particularly concentrated and single pointed individual endeavors magnified manifold by Gurudev's grace. This is a fact that Gurudev bestowed on them his spiritual powers of penance but it is equally true that these people also changed their life-style and way of thinking. Gurudev used to say that his yogic energy would also be ineffective in the case of those who do not change their life style.

Many years back a person approached Gurudev. Economically he was very poor, and also lacked good education. After visiting and trying a number of astrologers, tantriks, and occultists somebody advised him to seek blessing of Gurudev, being endowed with supernatural powers of goddess Gaytari. After giving him a patient hearing Gurudev told him, "Dear child, first have firm faith that Gayatri is source of Veda i.e. Goddess of knowledge. Secondly she is also the Goddess of wisdom. Hence She blesses only those who are determined to cultivate and awaken knowledge and wisdom in them. If you are willing to do it I will teach you the method of doing it. Once you have knowledge and wisdom, you have the master keys to success.

That man expressed his willingness to do his best to put into practice Gurudev's teachings. Then Gurudev said, "Trust that sustained efforts coupled with blessings of God make every impossible goal attainable. To get blessings of God you

have to carry on regular *Gayatri-Sadhana*. As regards the technique, the first requisite is to clearly decide the target and have an intense desire to achieve it. Instead of indulging in vain imaginations one should strengthen his main aim. The second point is to have strong faith. This faith should be on your own capabilities and in the Deity of your devotion. Third requirement is persevering and balanced effort undaunted by obstacles. You should never lose heart. You should maintain equilibrium in your efforts so that no tension could affect your capacity adversely. Fourth point is to accept and face situations as they arise. By following step-by step path of success you are sure to reach the goals you set for you.

20

Mutual understanding and tact

*Sahdayam sāmmanasyam vidvesam knomi vah
Anyo anyamabhi haryata vatsam jātamivāghnyā*

- Atharvaveda 3/30/1

"I create kindheartedness, understanding and amity for you. As a cow loves her new-born calf, so should you have love for one another".

Tact and understanding are inter-related. Only those who are tactful can develop mutual understanding, and only those who know the art of such understanding can be tactful. The whole edifice of *jivana sadhana* stands on these two pillars of behaviour. Any deficiency or malfunctioning in them makes the course of life topsy-turvy. Many practical difficulties and mental disorders crop up like weeds and prevent the growth of inherent potentialities.

Those who aspire for *jivana sadhana* and development of their inherent capacities must be thoroughly proficient in the art of tactful dealing and mutual adjustment, because only when there is a certain level of peace in outer life, could there be attainment of calmness and concentration in the inner life and uninterrupted flow of spiritual consciousness. Persons oblivious of the essence of *jivana sadhana* often neglect this truth. As a result, not only their daily life becomes disturbed, but their interior also remains uneasy, sad and restless.

To emerge out of this syndrome, we should develop deep understanding of our practical life. In the words of the great poet-saint Kabir, our behaviour should be such as "*auron ko sheetal kare, āpahu sheetal hoye*" (makes others cool and remains cool itself). How all this could be possible in the present atmosphere of jealousy, ill will and suffocation, and if possible, what could be the methodology to cultivate these attributes? This question may be agitating the minds of readers. But for the practitioner of *jivana sadhana*, the solution is very simple. We have just to assimilate some key elements of lofty thought and conduct in our lives.

We will have to honestly accept the truth that it is the thought and emotions which we sow in the soil of life that, after germinating and growing according to the seeds, appear before us as the harvest. As we sow, so we reap. Therefore, we should always be alert about what we are thinking of others, what is our feeling towards them. Any ill feeling or ignoble thought must not be allowed to gain foothold in the mind under any circumstances, regardless of what feelings others may be harbouring towards us. For his malevolence, the other person will be responsible, and he, not we, will reap its poisonous fruits in due time. If we react by reciprocating in kind, thorns will start littering our lives too. Hence we should imbibe this verity of life well this very moment.

Now for the key to behaviour, the first point to note is that our behaviour is two layered. In the first layer come those persons with whom our dealing is very intense and intimate, for example, members of the family. The second layer comprises of all others whom we meet for some reason for a specific duration. This duration could range from a few minutes to a few years. In our behaviour towards the intimate persons, we should try to understand minutely their personalities, their tastes and their sentiments, and try our utmost never to be the cause of their hurt. Another important thing in this regard is that while we should perform our duties towards them, we should, on our part, have no expectation from them. This attitude will ensure both mutual adjustment and tactful dealing.

Of the persons in the second layer, too, we should try to develop an objective understanding of their personalities. It is

true that this requires keen insight, but the external aspects of the personality can be gauged even with common sense. With this understanding, we will be able to identify the particular aspect of a person's personality with which we can have a working adjustment. In routine interaction, we should consciously avoid interfering in another's private life or offering unsolicited advice. Giving opinions or sermonizing all the time without rhyme or reason strains mutual cordiality.

Param Poojya Gurudev was supremely proficient in the art of pragmatic behaviour and mutual understanding which was often noticed in small events and gestures in his life. Whenever a visitor came, *Gurudev* would get up to give him a welcome. He would draw a chair himself and offer it to the guest even if many *parijans* be present there. If any of them attempted to help him, he would politely decline and say "It is my responsibility". "Give respect, take advice" *Gurudev* was a personification of this aphorism, whereas we are wont to do the reverse, i.e. we give advice and expect respect.

Another key to tact and understanding is to distribute pleasure and share pain. *Gurudev* used to become very moved to see anyone in misery. He was ever ready to sacrifice every pleasure to mitigate a visitor's sufferings and would spend a big part of his *tapa* acquisition for this purpose. His followers have to tread this very lofty path. Their behaviour towards others and their mutual relationships should be suffused with love. If difficulties come in the way they should bear them stoically and at no stage should thus get perturbed by adversities.

What should be ideal attitude towards adversities?

*Ayutoahamayuto me ātmāyutam me cakśurayutam
me śrotramayuto me prānoayuto meapānoayuto
me vyānoayutoaham sarvah.*

- Atharvaveda 19/51/1

I am unconquerable. My spirit is unconquerable. My eyes are unconquerable. My prāna śakti (subtle life current) is unconquerable. My apāna life current is unconquerable. My vyāna life current is unconquerable. I am fully unconquerable.

Do not get perturbed by adversities. Face them boldly. Problems and adversities come into everyone's life. They spare none. Even those who live in comforts or hold high positions are confronted by such situations. Life is, in fact, a composite of dualities - pleasure and pain, riches and poverty, fortune and misfortune, and so on. That the one facet may exist but the other not is simply not possible. Even if it were to happen for some reason, life would become unidimensional, monotonous and dry. For complete and all-round development, times of trial are as much necessary as moments of joy. Either situation puts to test our subtle power of discrimination.

If the time of adversity is utilized properly, it leads to the cleansing of the *karmic* sediments deposited on the soul over many previous births as also to the purification of the inherent urges and to increase in inner strength. Hence, instead of running away from crises, one should learn the technique of using them as lessons. Blessed are they who make themselves thoroughly proficient in this art. In the history of mankind, the lives of all great men and women are a testimony to the verity of this statement. They all were sculpted and shaped by Nature with the chisel of adversity and misfortune. The lives of those who live only in comforts and luxuries remain like uncut gems which command no real value.

Whether difficulties are small or big, one should try to develop a positive and purposeful attitude towards them. There is, of course, no need to invite troubles but a dogged spirit of struggle and perseverance in life does need to be inculcated. This quality comes to those who are non-sparing towards

themselves but charitable towards others. Those accustomed to an affluent life-style are staggered and even devastated by one blow of adversity while those who lead a hard and austere life are mentally strong and capable of weathering any storm with fortitude.

The other quality which needs to be developed is the courage to accept challenges. All the problems whether of health, money, an examination or some other matter present before us a challenge. Instead of getting perturbed or shaky we should confront and grapple with them. True it is that this fight will require us to make major changes in the pattern of our lives, in policies, values and habits. But what of that? What is right and justified must be done. To this end, no effort should be spared in marshalling all the inner resources, energy and courage.

Let us take the example of a health problem. This situation tests our patience and self-control. The doctors invariably prescribe alongwith medicines many dietary restrictions and a particular regimen of life. These instructions entail a life-pattern quite different from the one we are habituated to. Consequently, the majority of persons fail to follow them, succumbing either to the charms of the palate or other entrenched habits. To break out of this mould requires strong determination which comes from discriminative knowledge and enlightened thinking.

The same applies to other kinds of problems. They all require courage, fortitude and sagacity. He who has developed

these qualities in him is also able to quickly formulate an effective plan of action, a plan which not only manages the crisis effectively but also bestows fresh gains. These gains could be in the form of either new channels of material progress, renewed courage, increased mental strength or improved health status.

Yugrishi Gurudev used to say that adversities test our self-confidence and faith in God too; and we must come out of this fire purified and cleaned. Indeed, if adversities test the devotee, they also test God. If it is a trial of the devotee to see how firm his faith is in God or in his *sadguru* (spiritual preceptor), the latter also takes the test in how loving and caring he is towards the devotee or disciple. Experience tells us that God and *guru* never let the devotees come to harm. By their infinite grace, mountains of trouble turn into anthills.

An incident in *Gurudev's* life is a shining example of the positive and constructive attitude towards an ordeal. In the beginning of 1984, a malefactor, instigated by some demonic persons, made an attempt on the life of *Gurudev*. Although he could not succeed before the spiritual shield of *Gurudev*, yet he was able to inflict many knife wounds on the body. These injuries forced *Gurudev* to rest and recuperate for some time. In later years, while referring to this incident, he would jovially remark how enjoyable it was during those days. There was no work as such. So with total concentration of his being he kept communing with God. The *sadbana* for *sūkṣmīkarana* (lit.-"subtilization") could also be completed. Such a positive attitude in the midst of adversities is an inspiration for others to channelize the moments of crises into fruitful direction.

Stress is a boon, welcome it

*Udyānam te purūṣa nāvayānam
jīvātum te dakṣatātim kñomi
A hi rohemamamtām sukham rathamatha
jirvirvidathamā vadāsi.*

- Atharvaveda 8/1/6

"O Purūṣa (mankind)! May you prosper, not decline. I give you vital breath and puruṣārtha (endeavour). Ride this pleasurable chariot (body) which is the seeker of immortality, and till old age, disseminate spiritual and scientific knowledge."

If the moments of stress are utilized properly, life would continue to grow and mature smoothly; although, of late, stress has emerged as the main stumbling block in human progress and growth. It is true that at present stress is generally considered a curse and it is devouring human abilities at an alarming speed. The top echelon of the society is badly in its grip, and the situation has worsened so much that even school going children are falling prey to stress-related ailments.

But what exactly is this much talked about stress? Stress is the name of the challenges that are being continually thrown at our body and mind by the circumstances and situations. Haphazard life-style, declining culture of cooperation and camaraderie, cut-throat competitiveness and unbridled ambition all these have combined to aggravate the intensity of stress. Incidentally, stress in itself is not a disease, but if left unmanaged, it becomes the source of all psychosomatic maladies. Continuous and prolonged stress shatters the immune system of the body which, in turn, falls an easy prey to an unending series of diseases of the heart, stomach, respiratory system, skin and what not. And the poor mind? The less said about its plight, the better. It is the mind which is its first victim. Passing through the stages of fear complex, anxiety and depression the condition occasionally deteriorates to the extreme of mental breakdown.

But such an eventuality occurs only when stress is not wisely handled and utilized. With proper utilization,

malevolence of stress can be turned into the benevolence of gains. For this, we need to adopt the right attitude towards life, positive thinking and a healthy life-style. The first point to note in this connection is that stress is a messenger, not the message; a warning, not the worry. But for this timely warning, we would be deprived of many precious opportunities and gifts which nature and life wish to bestow on us. To create wakefulness is the first and an invaluable boon of stress. It is another matter that in our pessimistic mindset we mistake this wake-up call for a threat and get panicked.

Stress is also a great activator of body and mind. In this phase the activity level of mind reaches such a feverish pitch as cannot be achieved or even imagined in normal sedate circumstances. Ditto for the body; through stimulated nervous system and the endocrinal glands, the body primes itself and becomes fully organized, alert and geared. The whole energy of life peaks for the big fight ahead.

The next stage in this frenetic preparation is the single-pointed convergence of all concentration on solving the stress-generating problem. Perhaps this scenario is never possible without coming under stress. Solutions to the problems which otherwise would have troubled us for eternity are seriously sought and found in the stress-born state of high alertness.

The usefulness of the stressful moments can also be gleaned from the augmentation in inner strengths. Powers of

imagination and analysis, quickness of decision making and other such mental capacities multiply thousand times by the right utilization of stress. The body, too, develops better adaptability to new situations and its overall work-efficiency increases greatly.

But the one condition for deriving all these gains is that, in times of stress, our conduct should not be guided by cowardly panic and the tendency to run away. The need of the time is a problem-tackling mentality. If we orient ourselves in this direction, the boon of multiple new gains is certain to accrue.

Unfortunately, the modern man is failing in this regard. For the gallant, stress comes as the sound of the battle-bugle; and they gird up their loins and get into the battle mode. They view the developing situation as a challenge and an opportunity for snatching some benefit. Contrariwise, the timid get scared for life and lose even their normal abilities. But possession of the right mental cast notwithstanding, we all should consciously learn the right technique of stress management. Just as the war-weary soldiers, triumphantly return to the barracks for the much needed rest, we too should know the art of rejuvenation by resting after having invested the moments of stress into profitable channels.

Regular practice of *prāṇāyāma* (yogic breath control), *dhyān* (meditation) and *Gayatri Mantra Jap* in daily life fulfill this need. Only a few minutes of *prāṇāyāma*

augments our body's immune system and "keeps the doctor away". Similarly, *dhyān* is a unique method to achieve physical and mental equipoise. Practitioners of *dhyān* are already fully cognizant of its benefits; others too, must partake of its gifts. A daily recitation of *Gayatri Mahamantra* inculcates a vision of life which empowers us to break the stranglehold of stress and make it subservient to our will. Thus, if the potent triad of *prāṇāyāma*, *dhyān* and *Gayatri Mantra Jap* could become an integral part of our daily-schedule, stress will be transformed from a bane into a boon.

23

Recognize the value of time

*Samāna urve adhi sangatasah sam jānate na yatante mithaste
Te davānam na minanti vratānyamardhanto vasubhīryādamānāḥ.*

- Rigveda 7/76/5

They gather at the one place and take decisions with one mind. They do not act against one another. Not shirking their duties, and living in majesty, they do not break the decrees of gods.

We should know the value of time and honour its sanctity. All the secrets of life are encapsulated in this. Every instant, every moment is invaluable in itself, because it brings with it unique opportunities for us. One moment missed is one opportunity gone. Whatever that opportunity could have given us, we are now completely deprived of that. Every moment is thus priceless, because it has no equal, no substitute. What it is to bestow on us can never be given to us again by any other moment. To grasp the unmatched importance of time we should always bear in mind that it was a moment that gave us life. From that instant of birth till today, we have drifted in the stream of time formed by ceaseless drops of moments.

It is another matter that in this drift we practically remained unconscious and kept losing many things, missing the unending gifts of time. If we go into its reasons, the lion's share of responsibility may be laid upon our insentience-driven lethargy. The other reason is our disorderly life-style and its concomitant bad habits. Caught in this whirl, we have become a perpetual loser of opportunities in life. In our dim and dumb stage of mind we are not even cognizant of this loss, and if, on being reminded by somebody, we do take notice, it is of no purpose because by that time it has become too late. The great poet-saint Tulsidas very aptly says: "*Samaya chūki puni ka pachhitane, ka varṣa jab ksi sukhāne*" Meaning: There is no point in repenting after the time has passed. Of what use is rain when the crop has died?

More or less the same is the plight of our lives. Still we fail to imbibe this truth and do, or rather do not, as is our wont. Latent urges of the unconscious, habits and *samskārs* have such a spell over our consciousness that we just do not have the

sense to do the right thing at the right time, and opportunities keep skipping by us.

If change has to come, sit up right now, even as you are reading these lines. Come out of the stupor and wake up because the value and significance of this moment, is more than all the past and future moments. It has arrived bearing for you the golden gift of awakening. It has come to make you conscious of the sanctity of time and your own ordained duty. Do not let this moment pass in vain; do snatch benefit from it. Be firmly resolved this moment that you will swim like a champion swimmer in the inexorable flow of time. He who determines the direction of his course, makes his own paths, and with untiring endeavor break the hold of the strong current, is ultimately able to reach the shore.

There is a corpse-like state of existence too. The corpse, too, drifts with the current, but being lifeless and senseless, is not in a position to do anything. The waves toss and fling it about at will. It has neither any goal nor the ability to reach it with proper utilization of time. But then, what can it do after all? A corpse, that it is! Let us pause and mull over our situation. If we are being unable to make right use of time, is the nature of our existence any better?

Yugrishi Gurudev in his regular addresses to the *parijans* frequently emphasized the importance of time. He would say that the other name of *samaya* (time) is *Kāla* (the Law of Time), which is the controller of life in all respects and all aspects. He who does not respect *Kāla* is annihilated by *Kāla*; he, who follows its rules, has his glory immortalized by *Kāla*.

The first key to the observance of the rules of *Kāla* or Time is that we recognize the truth that our life is floating in the great stream of time. Only by purposeful use of the approaching moments and seconds and days can we actualize life's potential. The second key is that the life is our pious responsibility; we have to carry it out with full wakefulness. The third important point is that on every birthday, when the exact time of our birth arrives, we should prepare and adopt a work-plan for the next one year. Ensure that the plan is framed in a way that it permits fruitful utilization of every day and every moment. The fourth point is that this work-plan should assign due importance, with proper time allocation, to all the dimensions of life, viz. the body and health, intellectual and spiritual pursuits, family responsibilities, office work, studies, social obligations etc. Fifthly, this annual plan should have a break-up of monthly, fortnightly and daily schedules, too.

The daily schedule would form our daily routine. The nature of this daily routine should be that every day could be lived fully and in its entirety. A rebirth every morning, every night, death - try to experiment with this intrinsic feeling every day. Time-wasting bad habits, like casino, cinema, nightclubs and the like should be driven out. Start today, this moment. Do not make excuses for these urges, and your habitual laziness in the name of recreation. For recreation, go for good and healthy pastimes. In this way, only by making meaningful use of time can we be able to fashion a positively magnetic personality.

224

How to make the personality magnetic?

*Priyam mā kṇu deveṣu priyam rājasu mā kṇu
Priyam sarvasya paśyata uta śudra utārye.*

- Atharvaveda 19/62/1

*O Lord! Make me dear to gods. Make me dear to kings.
May I be dear to all the viewers, be they śūdra or vaiśya
(the servitors or the professionals).*

Attractive personality is formed by the judicious mixture of strength and emotions. The better the synthesis of these two elements, the more magnetic and charming the personality will be. Both the attributes are doubtlessly essential but their real significance and meaning lies in their proper synthesis. In isolation, either of the two loses its effectiveness. Strength alone without emotion and sensitivity does make a person capable and competent, but simultaneously makes him cruel-hearted too. Consequently, people, even as they feel attracted to the powerful person, also remain inwardly scared of him.

The same is the case with emotions without strength. In this condition, the personality develops tender feelings but lacks in determination and competence. This type acquires "the poor fellow" image inviting from the people a patronizing attitude. Such a personality can be anything but attractive. It is true that the thinking and behaviour of such a person touch the inner chords of those who come in contact, but for want of sufficient capability he is unable to provide them any succor. All the tender emotions in life can not add up to power and strength, and such persons are generally forced to lead the life of an imaginative and emotional but weak person.

Therefore, if you are desirous of making yourself magnetic, combine your strengths with emotions and then see how soon you become the centre of everybody's attraction. People of every age, class and qualification will vie with one another to be near you. The world will hold you up as a role model; it will talk about you, dream about you and want to

become like you. Whether you are a man or woman, farmer or officer, student or housewife, it does not matter. In every condition and every situation, the doors to personality furbishing are open to you. You have only to make a start.

The first step is to get ready to make the body and mind receptive and deserving. Remember, body becomes capable by self-control and mind by introspection and contemplation. A disciplined and regulated life-style and light physical exercises impart a certain beauteous luster to the body. For proper expression of this beauty, the dress should be in tune with the place and occasion. In this connection, the important thing to always bear in mind is that the real source of the accentuated charm of the body is the subtle vital energy and this vitality comes only by *tapa* and continence. Purity and piety increase person's vital force whereas unrestrained sensual proclivities sap it. To maintain attractiveness for a long time, one has to retain vitality and vigor for long too.

To become capable and strong at mental plane, develop the habit of introspection because it helps promote one's abilities and hidden talents. Identify what is your special talent, your innate aptitude and set about to work on that. It could be anything - music, sports, management, house-keeping, or any other branch of knowledge and art. If you find yourself unable to identify it, consult your friends, or guardians, or even Shantikunj. Do not lag behind at any level in the rigorous striving for talent nurturing.

Physical strength and mental prowess make one powerful. Now the turn is of the virtuous qualities that give expression to this power. So, try your utmost to inculcate the qualities of courage, bravery, patience and fortitude in you. These attributes will make you the sinecure of all eyes, not only at home and in the immediate locality but the society at large. Only the virtuous and the righteous radiate real magnetic, not the vicious and the wicked. Even the latter need a cloak of virtues to look attractive. It is another matter that after the spurious façade is gone, they are in for great ridicule and derision. The truly virtuous, on the other hand, retain their pull till the last breath.

Besides being strong and capable, one must be sensitive and emotional, because power without sensitivity makes a person arrogant. People will soon start running away from him. The three expressions of sensitivity presently relevant here are; (i) service to the needy, (ii) generosity, and (iii) tolerance. You will be able to develop your abilities through the instrumentality of all the three. The one basic rule to be observed is - be a giver, not a beggar. Only he who gives, attracts; a beggar repels, and people just shun him.

In this way, the *sadhana* of combining strength and emotion will continue to add charm to your personality. But you will have to remain continually vigilant for its full and effective expression.

25

Self-expression should be effective

*Aśvinā sāragheṇa ma madhunāṅkta śubhaspatī¹
Yathā varchasvatīm vācham āvadāni janān anu.*

- Atharvaveda 9/1/19

*O the gods of light, Ashvini Devas! Endow me with the
honey made by honeybees, so that I may speak to the
people in a sweet and illuminating tongue.*

Speech is the chief medium of expression. It reveals the inherent qualities of the personality. Behavioural skill, talent, and inner strengths - all find expression through it. But on the obverse side, the blemishes and weaknesses are also mirrored. For the wise, even a short conversation is sufficient to assess the general qualitative level of a person. It does not take long for the pettiness of the petty and the goodness of the good to come out through this medium.

But although the chief medium, speech is not the only one; there are other agencies too, namely, facial expressions, eye expressions, modes of sitting and standing, gestures, and so on. They are all voices of the personality which many times are able to communicate it fully even if the tongue is silent. The buoyancy of self-esteem, the gleam of self-confidence, the listlessness of self-contempt and the hesitations of latent complexes - all these feelings and emotions reveal themselves this way.

This expression of self is not an entirely unconscious or involuntary action. It can be improved and refined by the use of will power and by proper training. But for this, we will have to understand and evaluate ourselves afresh, watch our conduct, and resolve to root out the bad habits, which have crept into our characters. Are we ready for this? Ask this question of yourself repeatedly. If the answer is in the affirmative, you can definitely express yourself so effectively as to impress and even overwhelm those whom you meet.

For this, you will have first to keep close watch on the bodily gestures and postures, which constitute what is called the

body language. How you walk and sit, what is your demeanor when meeting any person etc. are some such aspects, which need a fresh look. Walking with a drag or thump, shaking legs while sitting and many such common habits make the personality unattractive or even repulsive. Some people walk with the head bent down, some bite nails while sitting or twist fingers, some keep picking nose. These and other such bad mannerisms show that the unconscious has our personality and its expressions under its thralldom. The sooner this condition is changed, the better.

When you walk, the gait should reflect elegance and assurance. Moving with measured pace and comfortable ease is a sign of self-confidence. Similarly, while preparing to sit, it is not proper to drag the chair or seat. After sitting down, do only that for which you are sitting there in the first place. Do not allow the involuntary actions of the unconscious to take a grip over you. Such finer points acquire greater significance when we go to meet somebody or present ourselves for interview. In such cases, permission should be sought before entering. If called in, you must not forget the appropriate salutation or greeting. There should be, on these occasions, a hint of cheer and natural calmness on your face. A tense expression shows lack of self-confidence.

When you meet someone, meet affably and genially, regardless of the immediate situation you are in, i.e., even if you are busy or surrounded by problems. A conscious effort to generate such emotions within oneself helps the growth of control over feelings, cool assertiveness and bold self-confidence in life. Also keep in mind that a dress mode

appropriate to the occasion enhances the effectiveness of self-expression.

Now comes the turn of expression by the tongue. Often the mode of speaking, too, suffers from many faults of involuntary mannerisms, e.g. idiosyncratic repetition of particular words or phrases, speaking either haltingly or too rapidly, launching into speech immediately after taking a seat and without surveying the situation, or alternatively, taking so much time to take off that the time is over. These defects are again the outward signs of the pressure of the unconscious. We should free ourselves from its hold.

Whenever we meet somebody or go to a public gathering, we should speak in a manner which is in tune with the ambiance. Normal courtesies towards those present should be observed. We should speak only when our turn comes, or after obtaining due permission. The matter should be presented methodically, point-wise, and supported by self-explanatory examples and proofs when required. Every stage of the speech should reflect our inner assurance, but not arrogance. When someone has to be contradicted, it should be done politely, with due respect to the person concerned. The speech should be made in a comprehensible, polite, firm and controlled tone. Be it speech or conduct, the more it is made free from the unconscious-driven reflexes, the better. Only such achievers, through their impressive personalities, assume the mantle of true leadership in life and society.

26

Characteristic leadership attributes

*Aham gbhñāmi manasā manamī
Mama chittamanu chittabhireta /
Mama vaśeṣu hdayāni vah kṇo mi
Mama yātamanuvartmāna eta //*

- Atharvaveda 9/1/19

*"I draw your mind with my mind, and mould it to my accord.
Follow in my wake by bringing your chitta in harmony with
mine. I cast a spell upon your hearts; come along with me by
doing as I do."*

How to lead effectively? In all walks of life and at every level- educational institutions, games and sports, industry, commerce, politics, social service, religion or the wider canvas of other collective human pursuits the presence of inspiring, competent, wise and dynamic leadership is essential for success. If the leadership is enlightened, there is a wave of progress, development and prosperity; if it is otherwise, degeneration sets in all around. An inspiring leadership is able to magically transform the crumbling structure of any institution, society or nation, and uplift it to pinnacles of glory, whereas under a lackluster leadership even the heights attained in the past crumble into nothingness.

How could that magical leadership be produced which could work wonders and get Herculean tasks accomplished? The answer is simple: through development of the attributes of competence, dynamism, commitment, farsightedness, caring concern, magnetic attraction, accommodation, etc. It should be borne in mind that it is such qualities in an individual and not the individual per se that command respect, adoration and following. From such leaders, who are the most prized assets of society, people have high expectations of right guidance and resolution of their problems. But if, unfortunately, in the name of leadership arrogance of power is foisted, then the subordinates suffocate and suffer. An arrogant and power-drunk person can never inspire anyone. Even his hangers-on only flatter him; they never really cherish any genuine goodwill and respect for him.

The ideal of perfect leadership is achieved and emerges in a person whose every facet of life radiates inspiration, who is brimming with the energy of great courage, who has the capacity and ready willingness to consecrate himself at the altar of his goal, whose character has such a fragrance that his followers swear by him, who is able to bring about full co-ordination among the members of his team , and who is ready to sacrifice his own personal interests, however big, for the collective interest of those he leads. Such a leader spontaneously evokes feelings of goodwill, respect and faith in the hearts of his followers. His one gesture has the power to galvanize dormant masses. His words cast a magic spell over millions and millions of people. In whichever direction he turns, masses of humanity follow him.

In the twilight period of his earthly life, Param Poojya Gurudev's heart was filled with pain at the paucity of leadership in the country. This anguish was often reflected in his words “The pitiable condition of our institutions, the humiliating sight of our country looking up to others for its every small and big requirement this situation has arisen solely because there is no effective leadership around. In the absence of such leadership, nothing can be achieved”. In course of his address to *parijans*, he would often say: “The country does not need *yogis*, *sainyasis* and *mahatmas* but self-sacrificing and courageous public servants who can give right direction to the society”

Leadership is provided by exemplary conduct and deeds, not by empty words. The need of today is that people be

like Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel and Subhash Chandra Bose who were always ready for every kind of sacrifice for the sake of principles and common weal.

Let all of us, *parijans*, introspect and evaluate ourselves. Are we willing to alleviate the agony of Gurudev? If your answer is in the affirmative, move forward; there is place for you in the front ranks. Only you will have to dive boldly the ocean of virtues and pick up the right qualities. In whichever direction you wish to lead, you will have to consciously strive to acquire the highest competence and excellence. This could be in any field - services, medicine, management, or any other. But remember that although ability is undoubtedly a prerequisite for effective leadership, it alone is not sufficient. For good leadership boldness and dynamism are also essential, and so is their transference to the co-workers. It is also imperative that he be a good judge of the merits of his colleagues, recognize the unique talent of each one of them, and share this knowledge with others. This will generate mutual confidence, respect and goodwill.

When the time comes for any recognition and honor, the right thing to do is not to step forward in a hurry to own the credit; the credit should be unreservedly given to members of the team as a whole. This will reinforce their confidence and faith in the leader. Along with this, they should also be given encouragement and inspiration through words of praise and by concrete recognition. Such gestures fill the hearts of his coworkers with increased enthusiasm and uplift their spirit. Their work-efficiency is increased manifold. Their inter-

relationships become warm and cordial. To maintain this spirit of bonhomie, we should make it a point that in our mutual interactions we highlight each other's merits and never highlight the weaknesses lest feelings be hardened and relationships strained.

Another quality, which must be developed for augmenting the characteristics of good leadership, is the ability to innovate, i.e. to think new ideas and execute them. Whatever be the field of work there should be constant endeavor to formulate practical work-schemes aimed at accelerating the progress of the organisation. Also, glad and enthusiastic participation of the co-workers in the execution of enterprises should be ensured. If we are able to gradually acquire and develop such leadership attributes within us, we will not only be able to provide successful leadership in our specific work-spheres but also become pacesetters for others.

An ideal leader leads from the front by example by walking his talk. In the Gita the Divine Teacher says about enlightened leadership:

*Yadyad ācharati śreṣṭhah tattedevetaro janah |
Sa yat pramāṇam kurute lokastat anuvartte ||*

Gita 3-21

“Whatever the person does, that is also followed by others; what standard he demonstrates by action, the people follow.”

Who can be a true visionary?

*Daivīm dhiyām manāmahe sumdīkāmabhiṣtaye
Varchodhām yajñavāhasa œ sutīrthā no asadvaše.*

Yajurveda 4/11

*We aspire for the divine intellect, which gives joyous
illumination and ensures completion of the yajña. May
that intellect be in our possession!*

To be a visionary is to acquire the ability to look far ahead into time and glimpse the future. This ability is a gift of that divine intellect which assesses its potentials and weaves a dream around it. This very dream is the goal of our life; it charts our paths and takes us in the right direction. In those who have this ambition, a unique capability develops. They are able to perform such deeds, as others cannot even imagine. Their vision acquires the power to penetrate the mist of the present and perceive the future clearly.

If you feel an urge to become someone like this, it is just natural. In fact, absence of such a feeling would be a cause of worry because that would be a sign of inertness. If there is any hint of this inertness, get rid of it, and take steps in the direction of becoming a visionary. For this, the first thing to do is to cherish lofty aims and ideals. What should be the type of these ideals may be gleaned from the sayings of *Gurudev*. According to him, only he is a believer who can clearly visualize the dazzling sun of a summer noon in a dark and stormy night sky filled with dense rain-bearing clouds. In other words, only he who can dare to dream of a glorious future cutting through the forbidding pall of dense darkness of hopelessness can be a true visionary. This requires an integration of a bold and imaginative mind and a subtle discriminative faculty. Indeed, we all have an imaginative mind and indulge in fantasies all the time. Sometimes, in our world of imaginations we become a billionaire, sometimes a record breaker in academic pursuits, another times a famous scientist or even the Prime Minister of the country. The highly fertile mindscape is always a kaleidoscope of colourful imaginations.

The reason behind such a state of mental jumble is that our imagination is not tempered with the subtle power of discrimination. Only when the two faculties are harmonized do they create a composite and focused dream - a dream which is not a vent for repressed and unfulfilled desires but a correct reflection of the dormant divine qualities within. An illustration of this may be found in the life of the President of India, Dr. A.P.J.Abdul Kalam. Once a child enquired of him whether he had read the *Mahabharat*. The President replied in the affirmative. The child asked again who among its many characters appealed to him the most. Everybody knows that the multi-dimensional characters of the great epic reflect almost the entire spectrum of human nature. The President, who understood the quintessence of the *Mahabharat* replied that he was very much impressed with the character of Vidur. "Why?" was the next query of the child. The President explained: "Because Vidur opposed the wrongs of those in authority and dared to raise his voice of dissent when all other stalwarts like Pitamah Bhisma, Acharya Drona and Karna had surrendered themselves to the whims of the persons in power" This reply of the President subsumed his own dream, which was the product of an imaginative mind and subtle discriminative knowledge - the dream of sculpting his own character in the mould of Mahatma Vidur. Let us ask ourselves whether we can dream such sublime dreams? We must dream of being the best, the noblest, the most sublime, and never allow petty thoughts and ideas to dominate the mind. Whatever we want to become - a scientist, an officer, or an artist - we should add one more aspect to that, and that is cultivation of the noblest character.

To realize this exalted dream, four steps need be taken. The first is the step of a runner. It means that you should have the energy and spirit of a runner who is committed and determined to show his skill and ability. The second step is that of a warrior. It is generally observed that a player feels elated at success, but failure gives him disappointment. With a warrior, however, it is not so. His very motto is "a soldier never quits till death" Valiant struggle and super-human bravery in spite of numerous wounds this is the message of the life of a great warrior.

The third step is that of the ruler. This is the stage when we have realized our vision of life, have actualized the dream we saw. All that we had desired, all that we had cherished is now in the palm of our hand. Life is at its apogee; now there is only to savour this experience. But the one attendant problem, invariably found at this stage, is that after having reached here people become egoist. Lest we become one, there is the fourth and last step - the step of a great man. Like a true saint, we should share our glories and accomplishments with others. We should go to those who need us. We should reach out to every door and every home, and help them, too, to realize their dreams. May their lives, too, be permeated with fragrance, may spring breeze come to their lives too - this should be our prayer of love in action.

28

*Let the fragrance of
jivan sadhana
Waft across
on this vasant*

*Madhu vātā tāyate madhu kṣaranti sindhavah
Mādhvīnah santvoṣadhiḥ.*

Yajurveda 13/27

Following the cosmic order, the winds blow soothingly and the rivers flow with nectarine waters. May the herbs be sweet for us.

Honey-sweet *Vasant* (spring) has once again come to our homes and lives with its full zest and vibrancy. It has brought on its wings the invigorating message of *jivana sadhana*, the same message as had come to our revered *gurusatta* (spiritual guide) *Param Poojya Gurudev* on the *Vasant Parva* in 1926. This time, too, the air is permeated with the same fragrance, the horizon has the same glow, the nature is suffused with the same exuberant surge of vital energy. In 1926, the *Vasant*-time message in the life of *Gurudev* had been brought by his own spiritual *guru*. This time the celestial tunes of this message have been composed for us by the transcendent consciousness of our *Gurudev*.

The advent of this *Vasant* is a time of test for us. On this auspicious and festive occasion, are we as wakeful and alert as was our revered *Gurudev*, who in his very first meeting with his *guru* surrendered himself completely to him and became a *sadhaka* of *jivana sadhana*? As a *sadhaka* and a disciple, every dimension of the life of *Gurudev* is a source of inspiration to be read, contemplated upon and followed. From the very first instant of his *jivana sadhana*, words of the *guru* became *Vedic* dicta and unflinching faith in the *guru*, his whole identity. In every aspect of *sadhana* be it dietary rules, or refinement of conduct and thoughts, or the awe-inspiring *tapa* the standards set by him are milestones for us.

Can we, his spiritual progeny, surrender ourselves completely to the *sadguru*? Do we possess the courage to be true disciples? Are we earnest to overcome fully our stultifying lethargy; and the unyielding ego which fumes and frets at the

drop of a hat? Those aspiring to tread this path should judge themselves on this *Vasant Parva* in the light of *Gurudev's* life of a *sadhaka*. This is the touchstone of their *sadhana* and of the sincerity of their discipleship.

It is generally observed that on the one hand we talk endlessly of *jivana sadhana* and take pride in our discipleship, and on the other, are ever ready to plunge into a do or die situation for some small benefit or satisfaction of the ego. Annihilate if we must, our selfishness, our egoity, our conceit. A true disciple's identity is non-distinct from his *guru's*. Only the gross body is his own; the inner consciousness is that of his *sadguru*. This is possible only when the merry journey of life is steeled with the hot embers of *tapa*, the flames growing bigger and higher with every advance of the step. The *sadhaka's* life of *Gurudev* is its best example.

When did he crave for respect and honour? When did he bother for his identity? When did his ego obstruct his path? He had but only one passion the task assigned to him by his *guru*. An intense and fervent desire to dissolve himself fully in this task was his only identity. Every second of his life, every day, month and year of it, send out only this message. It is this ardour which elevated him to the pinnacle of *sadhana*. If supra-sensory powers are to be given recognition as visible proofs, it can be positively said *Gurudev* accomplished rarest of the wonders in the course of his *jivana sadhana*. He not only acquired the spiritual glories and powers scarcely within the reach of even *mahayogis*, but also liberally transmitted them to some worthy recipients.

As a *mahasiddha* (great mystic), the life of *Gurudev* is as much a saga of heroic endeavor, rigorous austerities and supreme sacrifice, as it is of compassion, paternal love, kindheartedness and extraordinary generosity for his followers. If we can attentively perceive, this bounty is available to us even now. Only his gross body has gone, his transcendent consciousness still pervades every pore of our beings. He exists just around us. We have only to open our hearts, and then we will realize how eager he is to shower his innumerable heavenly gifts on us.

Even at this moment, through these words, he wants to mingle his voice with our emotions, something like what he had said on one occasion: "Try to shape and see and experience yourself as a person who has courage as well as illumined wisdom, who is humble, whose character has the fragrance of *tapa*, and who has the capacity for ceaseless striving for self-growth. If he occasionally stumbles, or is faced with a failure, he is not perturbed or loses his patience, but resumes his journey on the *sadhana* path with renewed vigor and courage, because he knows that the setback is temporary, failure is transitory; at the end success is certain. You and only you have a right over the ultimate and supreme accomplishment of *jivana sadhana*. This is inevitable. No one can alter this verity in any circumstances, because the responsibility of taking you to that pinnacle is mine" These words of *Gurudev*, are a source of unlimited energy and courage for us, his followers, on this *Vasant Parva*. So, no more delay or prevarication; with him in mind, step ahead for *jivana sadhana* now, this moment.

29

Golden tips for living a purposeful life

*Aum bhūrbhuvaḥ svah, tat saviturvareṇyam
Bhargo devasya dhīmahi, dhiyo yo nah prachodayāt*

- Rigveda 3/62/10; Yajurveda 3/35; Samveda 1462.

*'May we behold in our inner self the Supreme Being who is the embodiment of vital energy (*pr̄̄ñā*), the destroyer of suffering, the annihilator of sin, the joy incarnate, the sublime, the resplendent, the Divine. May that Supreme Being inspire our minds towards the enlightened, righteous path.'*

Invaluable resource:

Friends!

The refinement and sublimation of personality depends upon cultivation of virtuous qualities. All of you can shape your personality in a better way and transform it into a glorious one. Eminence and nobility of personality is an invaluable asset which leads to success in all domains of the physical (worldly) and spiritual life. Wealth, materialistic tools or support and cooperation of others alone is not sufficient for worthwhile achievements. These resources are useful and could be necessary, but above all this, the master key is sublimity of one's own personality. How to refine the talents? How to develop an elevated personality? How to endow it with virtuous qualities and potentials? This is the paramount question, the central focus of the "Art of Living". Finding its methodology and proceeding accordingly - is indeed like achieving at least half the goal towards a brilliant and fulfilling life.

From crudity to chiseled refinement:

Jīvan Sādhanā means --transmutation and enhancement of potentials, abilities and conduct by self-endeavor. The subtle mental imprints of the previous lives in the chain of eighty-four hundred thousands *yonis* (different life-forms) continue to influence one's tendencies in the human life as well. As a result, in the crude state of human life, one's cravings, behavior and actions are often driven by beastly instincts and negative mental tendencies. Until uprooted and thrown out, these *kusanskāras* (evil impressions on the mind) hinder the refinement of personality. Elimination of these untoward, negative and pernicious instincts, habits and desires

by untiring efforts and simultaneous cultivation of ennobling character and deeds is the real *sādhanā* of human life. This *sādhanā* is no less exacting than taming and training a wild animal and to engage it in constructive activities as per our will.

As crude metal from the mines is melted and refined in the fire before it could be processed to make shining ornaments, likewise the impurities of the *kusanskāras* need to be burnt out in the 'fire' of devout ascetic practices (*tapa*) of self-restraint and penance. The endeavors towards self-refinement are simultaneously accompanied by those of self-development through cultivation of noble qualities, upright conduct and character, values of human life and promotion of the worthy potentials and talents. This is how we can 'manufacture and design' the precious jewels from the 'gold-mine' of capabilities gifted to us by Nature. We should root out- from the field of our life - all the thorny weeds of evil tendencies and weaknesses of our nature and remodel ourselves as civilized and cultured human beings.

True success possible only through single pointed *sādhanā*::

Sādhanā is the key to paranormal attainments and preeminent success in human life. *Jīvan-sādhanā* should be an integral part of our lives. For this, we should introspect and analyze our thoughts, our conduct and our activities impartially and thoroughly. We should also develop positive attitude and sincerely endeavor to uproot the infirmities, untoward and evil tendencies lying dormant within us. This process of constant self effort of gradual refinement and upliftment also implies

conscious self-development, widening of outlook and altruistic involvement in the sorrows and joys of others. Self-development is achieved by substitution of selfishness by selflessness. This is what leads to supernormal attainments and awakening of divinity in the human heart.

Positive transformation of attitude:

The corner stone of overall self-transformation is transformation of the attitude. Change your outlook towards yourself; think and feel yourself not as the gross body, the immortal soul, for which this life and the body is only a sojourn in the infinite journey. You are born for the self-realization, for enlightenment, unbounded spiritual progress. No doubt, you should take care of healthy sustenance of the body. But don't confine the goal of your life only to blindly pursue after the possession of its comforts and pleasures. Your attitude should be - "eating to survive" and not "surviving to eat"; take proper care of the body as an instrument for the optimum use of the faculties of your sense organs and the mind. Change your views and behavior on the personal, familial and social fronts of life accordingly. Once you turn your attention inward and look at yourself as the soul, you will find marvellous solutions to all your problems and worries; the door of immense joy and progress will be wide open before you.

True devotion:

Friends!

Life is a precious gift. Don't let worldly allurements and attachments overpower and overshadow the beatitude and sublimity of your real self and the pristine dignity of your life.

Look at the life of Goswami Tulsidas, for example! When he was blindly driven by sensual attractions and attachments, he received nothing but disdain, scorn and agony. But once his inner self was lit by the light of devotion to God, the same man (Rambola) became the great, venerable saint Tulsidas – the author of the holy Ramcharit Manas of immortal glory! But see..., his devotion was not like ours...; we chant the mantras, rotate the rosary, but our minds remain restive and unstable - roving around our tensions, desires, and what not. His was a total self-surrender. Nothing mattered to him except the devotion to Lord Ram. Such was the potency of his inner fervor for his Deity that it could compel Lord Ram Himself to appear before him and bless him in His Embodied Form.

Fight the Mahabharata within yourself:

Mahabharata is said to be the greatest war ever fought on this earth. Friends! You should know that the first step towards spiritual upliftment is to fight this gigantic war yourself in the battlefield of your own psyche, to wipe out its accumulated vices and tendencies. Our lives remain enslaved to the insane appetites and tendencies of the mind until and unless we are able to win this perpetual war against hostile hordes of *Kauravas* entrenched within us. Winning this war means attaining ultimate victory; becoming omnipotent. Those who conquer their minds are called *manasvi*. Success lies at their feet; they are the ones who become truly great personalities, saints, divine beings. If you care and aspire for elevation to higher domains in life, join the great battle against the evils lodged within you. The first step towards triumph in this battle is the adoption of the principle of "simple living and high thinking"

Rise and march towards higher goals:

Friends!

If you adopt the principle of "simple living and high thinking" you would soon start attaining rapid progress in life. Simplicity of life-style will automatically eliminate your sense of scarcity. This together with the positive and constructive transformation of your thinking and feelings will enable you to make constructive use of whatever resources you have. You would be happier with the same set of tools, facilities and resources you had earlier. Not only that, by prudent use of your potentials you will also be able to help others. Even if you are not able to go out and work for social service or offer visible help to others, you must keep your thoughts open for that; think good, think high; think like the great, the wise. Your imaginations, your aspirations must now be directed towards better, brighter and nobler objectives.

Leave the slippery path of decline; come out of the hell and look at beauty of the heaven; live for ultimate salvation. Salvation implies emancipation from all evils, sensual attractions, selfish attachments, illusions and sufferings. Moving towards the heaven (divine paradise) means -- pursuing those ideals and principles which bestow everlasting peace, unalloyed joy, pure knowledge and soul-contentment. Start bringing about the needed change in your thinking, living, behavior, actions from this very moment, so that you could march ahead towards the attainment of the preeminent goal of life.

